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SERMONS

ON THE MOST

IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS,

DELIVERED CHIEFLY ON

COMMUNION OCCASIONS;

TO WHICH IS APPENDED THE

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS

OF

REAL CHRISTIANS.

BY THE

REV THOMAS BOSTON,

OF ETTRICK.

IN TWO VOLUMES,

VOL. II.

ABERDEEN:

GEORGE AND ROBERT KING, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.

1849.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO

THE FIRST EDITION.

It is absolutely certain that the following Discourses are the genuine Works of the worthy Author whose name they bear: they have been transmitted through the hands of his lineal descendants. From the handwriting—which is such as was common in the beginning of the eighteenth century—though now rather antiquated, as well as from the information of those who had access to know, it appears these Sermons were the original *autographs*, written at the time of the dates affixed to them; but to those acquainted with the spirit and manner of Mr. Boston's other writings, the perusal of the Discourses themselves will finally convince them they are genuine. The character of the Author as a judicious, evangelical, and practical writer, is long ago finally established. The Discourses now offered to the public have been selected from a variety of his manuscripts, with considerable care, and faithfully transcribed by one fully qualified for this service. They were chiefly composed by the Author in that period of his life when his mind was most vigorous, his knowledge of the gospel very enlarged, his religious attainments highly eminent; and at a time, too, when, from a variety of circumstances, he was enabled to pay particular attention to the formation of his Discourses. They are equally full and judicious with those already published; and we are persuaded will be much relished by those who understand and value the most accurate methods of teaching evangelical truth. They discover that serious and spiritual strain, that perspicuity of language, that happy fertility of Scriptural proof and illustration, which are conspicuous in his other Works. Several respectable Ministers and Christians have expressed an earnest desire of their being sent forth to public view. As the former Works of this great and good man have been eminently blessed to the edification of many, it is devoutly hoped the present publication will produce the same effect.

Rev. John Brown, Minister, Whitburn.

Rev. Ebenezer Brown, Minister, Inverkeithing.

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COMMUNION SERMONS.

Action Sermon, Simprin, February 2, 1707.

CHRIST'S PEOPLE, A WILLING PEOPLE.

SERMON I.

PSALM CX. 3,

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is this day erecting his standard in this place, requiring us to submit ourselves to him. But, Oh! how averse are sinners to submit to him; were it left to their own will, he should be a head without a body, and though he travailed long and sore, yet should have no issue; but God hath otherwise secured it. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

This is spoken to Christ, by David, in the spirit of prophecy. That it belongs to Christ, no Christian can doubt; for here David in spirit calls him Lord. The Jews, denying the divinity of the Messiah, could not extricate themselves from that difficulty. "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" But to us it is easy, for as he was man, he was the son of David, and came after him, but he was more than man, being God he was David's Lord, and so was before him. He is in this Psalm held forth as a priest having an everlasting priesthood; and as a king, who hath Jehovah for his confederate, who sets him at his right hand, even on his throne, after he had overcome death, Rev. iii. 21. He is placed upon his throne, with a promise that his enemies shall be made his footstool; which imports his absolute victory over them, and the eternal disgrace that shall lie upon them. The footstool is a piece of state, that both raiseth and easeth him that sitteth upon the throne.

In the second verse it is plain David speaks, and so continues; "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength," that is, the gospel in power, "out of Zion," Micah iv. 2. Thy kingdom shall begin

there, but it shall extend itself to the nations. But how shall he reign that hath so many enemies? He shall set up his kingdom in the midst of them. But shall he have no kindly subjects? Yes he shall. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

There is here, 1. Something supposed. Namely, that Christ hath a people in the world where he erects his standard, that he hath a special relation to, and interest in. Thy people, even his people, Matth. i. 21. The elect who are his, by gift from the Father, John, xvii. 9, and by purchase, he hath bought them with his blood, John x. 15. It is supposed also, that he finds these unwilling to submit to him, as well as the rest of the world. The corruption of the will, is common to them with others. They are not only as infants who do not know their Father; but as rebellious children, who yield no obedience to him.

2. There is something here ensured to the mediator, respecting this people of his; namely, that these unwilling people shall be willing, Hebrew, *willingnesses;* which imports that they shall submit to him, and give away themselves to him; acknowledge the right which Christ hath to them, and be his people by their own consent. It imports that they shall do this cordially, with all their heart; it shall not be a lying to him, as hypocrites do; it shall not be a forced pretext only, but their wills shall be cast into the mould of his will, and in point of practice conformed to the will of his commandments. See Isaiah xlix. 18, and lv. 5.

3. There is the time when, and the way how this shall be done. "In the day of thy power." That is, in a day of the gospel's coming with power. "For the gospel is the power of God unto salvation." There is a power which is Christ's that makes them willing, that is the power of Christ's spirit, different from moral suasion, 1 Thess. i. 5. This power opens the heart, dissolves the stone in it, melts down the old will and renovates it. Nothing less can do it, nor break the iron sinew in their necks. Then there is a day for this power, a time appointed from eternity, at which everlasting love that was under a cloud, shall flash out on the faces of these children of darkness, and bring them forth to marvellous light. The gospel sometimes it is but like wild fire, that gives light, but does not burn up that on which it falls, but in this day it is big with power, and so brings forth children to God.

What follows, is diversely rendered, and interpreted too. It seems to me to point at these things: 1. The beauty: the spiritual beauty of those that are thus made willing; they shall stand before him in the beautiful garments of holiness, as so many priests unto God. 2. The suddenness of this change, as if that beauty of

theirs had fallen from the womb of the morning as the dew, Micah v. 7. And 3, the multitude of converts who are Christ's youth, or young men being born again.

DOCTRINE. That Christ hath a people in the world that shall be willing in the day of his power, cordially submitting to him. I shall,

I. Touch at that corruption of the will, with which Christ finds his people, as well as others possessed.

II. Speak of the willingness of the soul submitting to Christ.

III. I will touch a little at the day of power.

I. I am to touch at that corruption of the will, with which Christ finds his people, as well as others possessed, when he comes in a day of power.

1. There is a weakness in their will, they cannot will what is spiritually good and acceptable to God. They cannot produce one act of the will that is holy, till grace change their wills, no more than a dead man can produce his own resurrection. For we are by nature without strength. "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." They may with the foolish virgins, Matt. xxv. will grace, but they do but desire it in a carnal manner.

2. An aversion to good. We are naturally backward, and therefore must be drawn. How unwilling is the fish to be drawn out of its element into another, so are we to leave our own ways. "Ye will not come to me," saith Jesus, "that ye might have life."

3. There is a proneness to evil, a woful bent of the will carrying it to sin. "My people," says God, "are bent to backsliding from me." Hence they are mad upon their idols. Place Christ and the devil, life and death, duty and sin, before them, leave the will to itself, it will naturally run to the evil, as the water runs down a steep place.

4. There is a contrariety in the will, to the will of God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Hence it is enough for us in this state to will any thing, that God forbids it. Even the heathen confessed that men were disposed to desire unlawful things, and to rush upon things forbidden. Strip sin naked of all profit and pleasure that may attend it, yet the sinner will court sin for its own sake.

5. There is contumacy in it, the will is wilful or obstinate in evil. The man will not be turned, though he should run upon the sword point of vengeance. "Cast away from you all your trans-

gressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel." Unrenewed sinners, like the Leviathan, "count darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of the spear." Yea, they say, in opposition to the curse, "we shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our heart, to add drunkenness to thirst."

This is that corruption which we have derived from Adam, by whose fall all the faculties of our souls were corrupted and distorted: and our will in particular made wholly the devil's captive, not to be delivered but by a day of power.

We now proceed:

II. To speak of the willingness of the soul submitting to Christ. "Thy people shall be willing." What a wonderful change is this! The same soul that was unwilling before, is now willing. What makes the change? They are made, they do not make themselves willing. The Lord changes their wills, takes away the evil qualities of their will, and gives new qualities. "A new heart also," says he, "will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh; and I will give you an heart of flesh." Thus the power of God infallibly determines their wills; yet not blindly, but so as they see what most reasonably should turn the balance in their choice. For, in every step God deals with them as rational creatures, giving them a peculiar illumination to proceed. We shall particularize and illustrate this, by shewing what they are now willing to do, and how this willingness in every step is produced. 1. They are willing to part with sin. "Ephraim shall say, what have I any more to do with idols." They were never more willing to swallow the sweet morsel, than now they are to part with it. Their hearts were glued to their idols, now a day of power melts the glue, and the soul is content to part with sin, cursing the day that ever they met. The soul that held fast sin and refused to let it go, would give a world to be quit of it. Never was there a man that had drunk a cup of poison, that would more willingly have vomited it, than such a soul would now part with sin.

Now, how comes this wonderful change? Surely the man is made willing. There must needs be a power there, to make the man loath above all things, what before he loved above all things. This is plain, if you consider that the man was joined to his idols, and unable to turn from them. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. His sin was so rooted in his heart before, that no threatenings, no promises could separate him and it. Surely it must

be strong wind that rends the rocks, and lays the tall cedars upon the ground; and since he is willing to part with sin, surely he hath seen and felt something, which he did not see nor feel before. Yes,

He hath felt an uneasiness of conscience rising from the guilt of his sin. Sin hath become uneasy to him, and begun to work and sting him. Like Peter's hearers, he is now pricked in his heart. Unless the soul were ript up, how would it thus as it were cast forth its bowels. This uneasiness hath become intolerable. "A wounded spirit who can bear." His bosom beloved has been very troublesome, or why would he cast it out?

He hath also seen something in God, which he never saw before. The man would never have been willing to have parted with sin, unless he had seen happiness locked up in the enjoyment of God, and that sin separates him from that God, and will separate him from him for evermore if retained. But the soul sees itself lost and undone without God, and he is sure that he is liable to his wrath and curse for it, and is not able to abide with everlasting burning, or dwell in devouring flames.

2. They are willing to go out of themselves, to be divorced from their first husband the law; to cast off all confidence in their attainments and duties; to come to Christ stript naked and empty, with nothing in them or on them to recommend them to him but misery Their language is, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

Now surely there must be power here. Naturally we take the spider's motto, each, saying, I am indebted to myself alone. The covenant of works is engrained in our natures. Work and gain, do and live, is the first principle of all Adam's posterity. They were bred merchants, and they are ashamed to beg: and though their stock is gone, yet they will rather drive a trade of small wares than none at all. Coming out of our own righteousness is a death, a dying to a husband. "My brethren," says Paul, "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Does the spider sweep away its own web, which it spins out of its own bowels? Does a mother cast out the fruit of her own womb? or will a loving wife put herself to death, that she may be free of her husband. And so we are made dead to the law, as it is in the original. And therefore the willing soul sees that the best of their duties cannot procure the favour of God. Is. lxiv. 6, 7; Phil. iii. They see the emptiness and worthlessness of all they do. Hence they cannot but loath themselves as for their sins, so for their duties.

They see and feel an obsolute need of the Lord Jesus Christ and his righteousness. The person finds he is sick, and therefore needs a physician; that he is naked, his fig leaves will not cover him, and therefore the Lord God must make him a garment, "even a white raiment that he may be clothed, and the shame of his nakedness not appear."

He sees also, that he hath nothing in him, or about him to recommend him to Christ. Many spoil all, by thinking they have something that cannot but engage Christ to take their cause in hand, as their tears, prayers, repentance, deeds of charity. But the truly willing soul takes David's plea, Ps. xxv. 11. And comes as he is invited, without money, that he may take the water of life freely; lest he should meet with the entertainment of Simon Magus, and hear it said, "thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

He sees, moreover, that God and Christ should do him no wrong, though he should not be accepted, but be suffered to perish. He will say with the centurion, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." He will justify God come of himself what will, Ps. li. 4. And thus if the soul should meet with a disappointment it will leave its complaint upon itself. And upon the back of any refusal will say, "true and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord."

3. They are willing to take Christ as their Saviour, and to submit to his righteousness. God proposeth in the gospel a spiritual marriage betwixt his Son and sinners, Matth. xxii. Most men refuse the offer, but the willing soul heartily consents to the bargain and makes Christ its choice for all, instead of all, and above all; and takes him for a husband, as the captive woman marries the conqueror. The soul is well content to venture its salvation upon this bottom alone, Phil. iii. 9. To appear before God in the garment of his righteousness, to seek life in his death, and healing only in his wounds.

Now there must be a power to make the soul thus willing. Every man naturally is an enemy to Christ, and therefore as long as the soul can make any shift it will not come; there must be a drawing power; yea, such a power as wrought in Christ, when God by his mighty power raised him from the dead. The soul being thus willing it follows,

That such a soul hath seen a transcendant excellency in the Lord Jesus Christ. It hath seen him to be the pearl of great price. Sometimes like others, they said to the Christian, what is thy beloved more than another beloved? But surely now they see a beauty in him that captivates their hearts and makes their souls love him.

The veil covering, or face covering is taken away, and their eyes see the king in his beauty; a beauty that dazzles their eyes, that darkens all created glory, as the rising sun makes the stars disappear.

They have got also a satisfying view and discovery of the continuance of salvation through a crucified Saviour, else their souls could not acquiesce in it. The mystery of Christ is folly to the natural man when he comes near to look on it, but the willing soul gets another sort of a discovery of it, "determines to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." You know the world's opinion of the mystery of Christ crucified. "It was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." And that still remains true. "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Christ." Two things made the world stumble at the gospel way of salvation. Its supposed unsuitableness to the divine perfections, this is the bane of the Jews, Socinians and others. Its supposed unsuitableness to the case of men, this stumbled the heathens. To expect life from one crucified seemed a most gross absurdity to them. All natural men are in the dark as to this still, therefore they reject him. And therefore I conclude that the man that is made willing has got a view of the suitableness of this contrivance to the divine perfections. They have seen in it the manifold wisdom of God. Men that are not careful about their souls will venture them on they know not what; but a man that is in earnest about salvation, will never venture it on that bottom that is not made of God for that end. The man sees he hath to do with a God that is wise, just, and powerful, as well as merciful: therefore as no man will venture to sea in a ship that cannot hold out water, so the soul in earnest cannot venture unless it see the plan suitable to the wisdom, justice, and power of God. To such "Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

He hath also got a view of its suitableness to his own case. Men that see the worth of their souls will not take a remedy at random for their perishing souls, lest it be found poison instead of medicine. Wherefore the soul looking about in the day of distress, and finding nothing in the world but miserable comforters, Christ discovers himself to that soul, and the soul seeing his suitableness resolves to venture here as upon one able to save, and every way fitted for their needs. Matth. xiii. 45, 46.

4. The soul is willing to take on the yoke of Christ's commandments. Its language is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Having fled from the fiery law on Sinai, he is content to stand at Zion, and receive the same commands. He is willing to stoop and

take on Christ's burden, and is sorry he cannot bear it better. The ears that were shut before are now opened. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Holiness is now the desire of his soul. Now,

There must be a power here, what else could break the iron sinews in their necks, and tame the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. The wild ass could never be tamed till now, surely then the month is come. Hence it is evident the willing soul sees a beauty in holiness, a righteousness in the commandments of God, and a loathsomeness in sin. He considers all God's precepts concerning all things to be right; and he hates every false way. If sin be as sweet as before, if they see no beauty in holiness, surely they are not the willing people; and it is needless to them to pretend to the feeling of a power, unless they would make it appear that God makes men willing without reason.

5. The soul is willing to bear Christ's cross, to cleave to him and his ways, and to follow him through fire and water, Luke xiv. 25—33. All that he hath is at Christ's service, houses and lands, relations and life also. The smiles of the world cannot bribe him, nor the frowns of it drive him away. He is content to own Christ, when despised and rejected of men. Now there must needs be a power here to make a man thus willing, not only to suffer, but to suffer for him, for his glory, and to keep up his standard in the world; rather to suffer for him, than to sin against him. "Thus it is given to them in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake." Hence sin is more bitter to the willing soul than death, and all the sufferings to which they can be exposed, Eccles. vii. 26. Certainly both are bitter. Now, when both are laid before them, and they choose sufferings, this says, that sin to them is most bitter. Here is the ruin of many professors in a time of trial, sin was never the most bitter thing to them, though it hath been bitter; and therefore the Lord fits his people for suffering, by letting them experience the bitterness of sin.

Again, Christ is sweeter to the willing soul, than all the pleasures and profits of a world, else they could never be willing to forego these for Christ, Phil. iii. 8, 9. Alas! many never felt so much sweetness in Christ as in a lust, hence they let him go, and return to their lusts again. Some get half a view of Christ's preciousness, hence a half-willingness, a hankering after him. But still the world and their lusts are sweeter, and therefore like Orpha, they depart from him weeping.

Lastly, The willing soul is willing to go away with Christ, for altogether, home to his Father's house. I am not saying they are all absolutely willing to die. They perhaps want assurance of a safe

lodging place. But this I say, if Christ would carry them away to his Father's house, they would be content to bid farewell to all below, and go with him.

Now there must be power here, that reconciles a man to heaven, to everlasting communion with God. "Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Hence it is evident, the willing soul is one that hath a transcendant love to Christ, and a desire of communion with him; even of such a communion as may never be overclouded nor interrupted. They are unwilling to want it, and their souls long for it. We shall now,

III. Touch a little at the day of power.

1. Though the gospel may be long preached unto a people, yet there are some special seasons that may be looked on as days of power. The same power doth not always accompany the word. Days when the gospel is new to a people, days of persecution, days when there is a spirit of prayer poured out, and times of sealing ordinances, these are more likely than others to be days of power.

2. There is an appointed time for the inbringing of all the elect of God, and that is the particular day of power to them. As it was to the Israelites, when at the end of the appointed time, "even the self-same day, it came to pass that all the host of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." He that appointed the time of their natural birth, appoints also the time of their spiritual or new birth. There is a day and hour, in which everlasting love will dawn on the soul.

3. A dark night usually goes before this day of power. The soul is led to the place of execution before the pardon be given out; they are cast down before they be lifted up; conscience is awakened, the heart pained, before peace and health be diffused through the soul.

4. Whenever this day of power comes, the soul is made willing, the fort of the heart is taken, and the King of glory enters in state, turns out the old inhabitants, and puts in new. And there are three things done in that day. 1. Christ gives the conquering stroke, and by an Almighty power opens the prison door, and so it is the day of the captives' deliverance. 2. The spirit of Christ is at work travailing to bring them forth, and so it is their birth-day. 3. Christ gains the bride's consent, and so it is their marriage day.

Inference 1. Pray earnestly for a day of power. There are three things we much need, and which a day of power would do for us. 1. It would revive the graces of the spirit in the Lord's people among us, that are decayed and languishing. A marriage day is a feast day for the bridegroom's friends, in which the bridegroom

bestows gifts upon them. The Lord's people have need to be made more willing, to have the backwardness to duty taken off their spirits. 2. It would bring in many new friends to Christ, would bring many out of the devil's kingdom, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. 3. It would make enemies, that are none of Christ's purchase, to feign submission, and put a stop to the open profanity abounding in our day. Ps. lxxxi. 15.

Inference 2. Show yourselves Christ's people, by submitting to him. This day he is erecting his standard in this place, and we invite you in his name, to stand out no longer against him, but come to him and receive him, and give up yourselves to him. Motives,

1. Consider what you are, while you submit not to Christ. You are under strange lords. If you be not Christ's subjects, you are the devil's slaves; you are the servants of sin. And what is it you are so fond of, that you prefer it to Christ: is it pleasure or profit? "What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul."

2. Consider Christ is an exalted king. He is placed at the Father's right hand, on his throne. Will you deny him a lodging in your heart? The rejecting of Christ, in his humiliation, was grievously punished upon the Jews, what then shall become of the neglectors of an exalted Christ?

3. He is a priest as well as a king. It is only by virtue of his sacrifice and intercession, that you can get mercy. Finally, you must stoop to him sooner or later. "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. To him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." If you submit not willingly, he will make you his footstool. He is a merciful king.

Use 3. Try whether you be really such as submit honestly to Christ. Especially you that are to sit down at the Lord's table, see if you be a willing people. Try your willingness.

1. Your willingness if right, will be a supernatural willingness, made by a day of power. Wild oats grow without labour, but bread corn requires labour and pains. Willingness lightly gained, lightly goes. So it was with the stoney ground hearers, and those who received the seed among thorns. The child that never found any bitter thing on the breast, easily returns to it; and the soul that is willing to take Christ, but never felt the bitterness of sin, it is like it will not long stay with him.

2. It is accompanied with understanding. The willing soul makes an understanding choice. An error in the person, (in marriage),

makes it null. Many in their pretended choice of Christ, make a blind choice, not knowing him, hence they run away from him again. Mal. iii. 1, 2.

3. It is deliberate. The soul sits down and counts the cost, but a rash consent will be retracted.

4. It is an absolute willingness. Philip said to the eunuch, "if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." That is to believe with the whole heart, when the soul makes choice of Christ and his ways, because of their inward beauty, which they would do, were there no hell. But alas! many are willing to take Christ just to be a bridge, to carry them over the water of God's wrath.

Lastly, It is for the present. Real willingness will admit of no delay. Matth. viii. 21, 22.

Objection 1. I fear I am none of Christ's people. Answer, If thou be one of the willing people, surely thou art one of his.

2. I fear Christ is not willing. Answer, That is a dreadful reflection on his veracity. Do you think that he mocks you while he invites you, and promises you a welcome reception. Nay, know if Christ had not been willing, thou hadst not been willing, "we love him, because he first loved us." It is he who hath made you willing.

3. But I cannot get my heart made willing. O how backward is it, and averse to stoop. Answer, Is that thy exercise and burden? It is a good sign. Art thou willing to be made willing? that is some degree of willingness. Dost thou see that beauty in Christ, that hatefulness in sin, that thou art grieved that thy soul cleaves so fast to it, thou art of that willing people. Amen.

First Sabbath after the Sacrament, Simprin, Feb. 9, 1707.

THE SOUL'S ESPOUSAL TO CHRIST.

SERMON II.

2 Corinthians, xi. 2,

For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

It was a matter of great importance we were about last Sabbath, espousing poor sinners to the Son of God. But the bride is apt to forget, till she be brought home, and therefore we would put you in mind of it.

In this verse, the apostle shows how he stood affected to them. "He was jealous over them with a godly jealousy." The cause of this jealousy was the danger in which they were, notwithstanding the great length he had brought them. Their danger is specified, verse 3. The length he had brought them is in the text, in which we have his success, "he had espoused them to one husband," and the design of it, "that he might present them as a chaste virgin to Christ." These words I explained, and insisted on the first clause of the verse, at another occasion of this nature.

Doctrine I. Sometimes ministers get the treaty of marriage betwixt their Master and their people brought such a length, that they can say they have got the espousals made, and that with a design that they may get the bride, as a chaste virgin, to present to the bridegroom, when the great marriage day shall come.

In treating this subject, I shall,

I. Explain a little, this match betwixt Christ and his people.

I shall view it in these six degrees:

1. The first degree of it was the design and purpose of that match, in the heart of God, from all eternity. It is no new thing. It is older than heaven and earth. God hath had an eternity to think upon it, and never saw reason to alter his purpose. Concerning this, we may notice three things. 1. God seeing all mankind in a lost state, was pleased from eternity to have mercy upon, and to love those freely, who in time are brought to Christ. "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world. God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." He loved them, when there was nothing appearing in

them lovely. Man considered as innocent, was loved, but he soon ceased to be the object of that love, law-love. But God took man at his worst, and loved him then with a love of good-will, which set his mercy on work. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." 2. Those whom he loved, he designed to everlasting life, made choice of them to be his sons, heirs of the heavenly inheritance. He selected them out of the midst of shipwrecked mankind, fully purposing to bring them to Immanuel's land. 3. Those whom he thus chose, he gave them to Christ, to be his spouse in time, to be redeemed and saved by him. "Thine they were," saith Jesus, "and thou gavest them me." Christ accepted of them, upon the terms fixed by the Father, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." He needed them not, he was to buy them dear, yet he consents, and therefore they are called his people, Psal. cx. 3.

2. The removal of the lawful impediments of this match betwixt the Son of God and sinners. When this purpose was proclaimed in heaven, there appeared to object against the match, the justice, law, and truth of God. Justice says, the Mediator is God, and there can be no match betwixt God and guilty man, till I be satisfied. The law says, they are mine, and I will not part with them, till death part us. Truth says, God himself made this marriage betwixt them and the law, and therefore they cannot be married to another, unless first death dissolve the marriage. But the designed bridegroom will not let the marriage go back, and therefore he removes these impediments, by his obedience to the law, and by his death in our nature, and in our stead, which he did and suffered as a public person, even as Adam sinned, Gal. ii. 20. By this means justice is satisfied, and so content the match go on. "For," saith God, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The sinner dies to the law in Christ, and the law dies to the sinner. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." And so the parties being thus dead, the truth of God has nothing to object against the purpose of this new marriage.

3. The contract is written, drawn, and ready for the subscribing. "He hath made with me," says David, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Ordered, or prepared. And there are two things in the contract, 1. Christ's consent to match

with poor sinners, to give himself to the captive daughter of Zion for a husband, notwithstanding she be ill-favoured and unworthy; Rev. xxii. 17. There is next the dowry promised to the bride, and that is all things with him: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things," even all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, grace and glory, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. A large maintenance, and a good house; John xiv. 3. Yea, the contract is subscribed by the bridegroom and his Father. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." The contract is also sealed. "This cup," saith the bridegroom, "is the New Testament in my blood." All this before famous witnesses, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." The whole is registered in this Bible.

But is not this strange work, to write, and sign, and seal the contract, before the bride's consent be obtained, yea, before she be courted? ANSWER. The reason of this is, it is one of the articles, that the bridegroom shall gain the bride's consent. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Again, The bride hath nothing, for which to contract, and he looks for as little with her. She hath nothing in her, nor upon her, and can bring nothing with her, but debt, wants, poverty, and misery, and he is willing to take her as she is; Ezek. xvi. 1—14.

4. The courting of the bride, in order to gain her consent. And this courtship is managed in two places. *First*, Christ comes into her mother's house, to the public ordinances, and there he, by his ambassadors, courteth her consent. In the public ordinances there is a good report given of Christ, his willingness is declared, sinners are invited, exhorted, obtested to give away themselves to him; there is a moral force used upon them by arguments, "compelling them to come in, that his house may be filled." *Secondly*, Christ comes into the chambers of their heart, and then there is a heart conference betwixt Christ and the soul, without which the former cannot prevail, and here do pass these five things. 1. The Lord discovers to the soul its lost and undone condition; that like the prodigal, Luke xv. it is perishing with hunger. 2. The Lord tells the soul that its other lovers will ruin it. Sin will damn the soul,

the law will never be satisfied with all that the soul can do. 3. The Lord tells them that he is willing. 4. He discovers himself in his beauty. *Lastly*, He reveals, stretches out his arm, and lays hold on the sinner in the day of power. "The soul is apprehended of Christ Jesus." And then follows,

5. The espousals. The soul being overcome, gives its consent to take Christ for a husband, renouncing all others. The soul makes choice of Christ. With the whole soul, the soul makes choice of a whole Christ. Their great desire is, "to be found in him, not having on their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. They esteem him altogether lovely in his person and in his offices. They can want none of him. Again, they make choice of him all, for all, and instead of all, saying, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire, besides thee." According to the law of marriage they cleave unto him, forgetting also their own people, and their father's house. Their choice of him is for ever, in all times and cases, even beyond the limits of time, taking him to be the strength of their heart, and their portion for ever. The soul gives itself away to Christ. Servants give work for wages, and masters give wages for work. Suitors give tokens and pledges to draw on love; but husbands and wives give themselves to one another, and this is a blessed day. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

Lastly, The consummation of the marriage betwixt Christ and the soul. The espousals are in this life, at our believing, the marriage is consummated in glory. Then shall be heard the shout, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Now the espoused bride shall be presented to Christ, as the bride to the bridegroom, in the marriage day by her friends. Hence Christ is represented as coming at the last day, as a bridegroom to the marriage, with his espoused wife. Matth. xxv. 1—5. Then shall the mystery be finished, and the copestone be laid upon the great design of God in the gospel.

Now there is a time betwixt the esposals and marriage:

1. This time is for the trial of the bride. "And I said unto her thou shalt abide for me many days, thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee." In the meantime, the old lovers will come back again, and endeavour to recover her affections which they have lost, and often do

they so succeed, that they get hold again of some who were never sincere in their espousals, but others remain firm.

2. This interval is, that the bride may make herself ready. As the espoused virgin takes up her time providing for the marriage, so the soul by making progress in sanctification, dying more and more unto their lusts, is prepared for the consummation of the marriage in heaven. I proceed,

II. To shew what hand ministers have in this match.

1. They are proxies for the bridegroom, sent as Abraham's servant, to seek a wife for their master's son; because he is a king, yea, the prince of the kings of the earth. They are ambassadors, and that of peace; 2 Cor. v. 18—20. Their work is to commend their Lord, and to gain the bride's consent.

2. They are witnesses, though not to the formal consent, yet to that which imports a consent. They see how their message is entertained, though indeed they may be so far deceived, as to take a feigned for an unfeigned consent.

3. They are the attendants of the bride, to adorn her for her husband. It is by the word, that the espoused soul is made clean, and fitted for Christ, as the Greek word in our text signifies.

Lastly, The text tells us of another part of their work, namely, their presenting her to the bridegroom at the last day. This may import their joyful account of their ministry to their master at his coming, when they shall be able to say, Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me. "For," says Paul, "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming; For ye are our glory and joy." Let us now,

III. Inquire why the Lord employs men in this great and honourable work.

1. It is in condescension to our infirmities. If God had employed angels, how would we have been able to have looked upon them. Manoah and his wife, fell on their faces to the ground, when they saw the conduct of the angel that appeared to them, Judges xiii. Ever since sin entered the world, commerce with spirits is dreadful to men; but here, men of like passions with ourselves, transact this most important matter.

2. It is very agreeable, in regard God is in Christ, and the divine nature united with the human nature, that therefore men should deal with men, to bring them to the man Christ.

3. That God may have all the glory. Were angels employed to espouse souls to Christ, it would be thought that the power was from them; but the more contemptible the instruments are the more does the power appear to be of God, and not of us.

DOCTRINE II. That the great design of espousing sinners to Christ here, is that they continuing chaste and faithful to Christ after the espousals, may at last be presented to Christ, to be married to him in heaven his Father's house. Here we shall,

I. Inquire what it is for the espoused to keep chaste.

II. Consider the presenting of the espoused that keep chaste, to Christ. We are then,

I. To inquire what it is for ihe espoused to keep chaste.

1. They must never be called by another name than their espoused husband. They must hold fast their profession, come what will, Heb. x. 23. The company standing with the Lamb on mount Zion, "have his Father's name written in their foreheads, and they have not defiled themselves with women: for they are virgins: these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." It must be known by our profession, to whom we belong, thinking no shame to own him before the world. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Matth. x. 31—33.

2. They must never go back to their former husband, for the soul that is really espoused to Christ, is divorced from idols and lusts, and therefore must not go back to them. "As obedient children, not fashioning themselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance." This gauding after other lovers, is breaking to the heart of Christ, Ezek. vi. 6; and the soul giving up itself to them again, Christ gives up with that soul, saying, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." So we must resolve that we will not go back from Christ, but say, "quicken us, and we will call upon thy name."

The soul espoused indeed to Christ, is divorced not only from lusts and idols, but also divorced from the law, and we must not go back to it again. "Wherefore my brethren," says Paul, "ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Now the soul returns to that husband first, when it acts from the law in duty, that is, when they are actuated by the influence of the covenant of works, being stirred up to duty, only from hope of reward, and fear of punishment. The soul also returns to this husband, when it acts for the law, making duties our righteousness before God, and going about to procure the favour of God by them. On the contrary, the chaste soul acts from Christ out of love to him, and in his strength: and for Christ, to his glory. Believers are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew

forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Christ must always have our hearts, our love, and the chief room in our affections. "If any man," saith Jesus, "come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Whether they be lawful, or unlawful comforts, if they have more of our hearts than Christ, we are unfaithful to our espoused husband, and "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Never do any faithfully give themselves away to Christ, but they have seen more beauty in him than in any other, and therefore he will have their chief love.

4. They must cleave to Christ, over the belly of all the world's smiles and frowns also. They must neither be bribed, nor driven from him. Song viii. 6, 7. Christ's spouse may lay her account with flatteries, to draw her away from Christ; but as "Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, so ought all his people to do." They will meet also with threatenings, and persecutions, and afflictions, but all they have must be at his service, they must part with their very lives to preserve their chastity, if called to it.

5. They must be separated from the world: not only from the world in their hearts, but from the men of the world, in their practices; therefore they are held forth, Rev. xiv. 4, as a company selected out from among the rest of the world; and they are enjoined "not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind." To be like the world, neighbour and other, will not do. They must no longer, as in time past, walk according to the course of this world. They must cleave to the purity of the gospel, in doctrine, worship, and practice.

Finally, They must be sincere and upright. "And in their mouth was no guile; for they are without fault before God." Chaste virgins are like Nathaniel, without guile. Hypocrisy would spoil all. Our espoused husband is a searcher of hearts, and will not be put off with vain pretences. We now proceed,

II. To consider the presenting to Christ of those that keep chaste. Concerning this, I would notice these six things:

1. The time of it, it will be at the great day. When Christ comes as Judge to others, he will come as a bridegroom to his own. Matt. xxv. 1—12. At death they are presented to him, and received into glory; but then both soul and body shall be glorified.

2. They, and they only, that keep chaste, shall be presented to

Christ, as to a bridegroom, in order to marriage. The high priest, under the law, was not to marry a whore. They that shall depart from Christ, shall be made to depart from him there. "For there shall in no wise enter into heaven any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." But the chaste virgins shall be brought to the king, Psalm xlv. And it must needs be so, for it is not consistent with his honour to take others, and not consistent with his faithfulness to forsake them.

3. The house out of which the bride shall go, even out of a grave, or out of the world, this earth. Some will be found alive when the bridegroom comes, they shall be changed; some in their graves, they shall be raised. Out of prison they go to reign.

4. The bride's attendants. A glorious company shall be with her, when she is to be presented to the bridegroom. Angels shall attend her, they that were witnesses to her espousals, shall also be witnesses to her marriage. And O what a joyful day will it be, when Christ's ministers shall say, here are we, and the children thou hast given us.

5. The place where the bride shall be presented to the bridegroom, "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord." Christ will thus come more than half way to meet her. And O what a joyful meeting will that be.

Lastly, The place where the marriage shall be solemnized, that is the bridegroom's father's house, even in heaven. "Then shall they be ever with the Lord." O blessed espousals to Christ, but yet there is a great difference betwixt the espousals and the marriage, as 1. The espousals are made on earth, but the marriage in heaven. They are probably espoused in the temple below, but the marriage is in the temple above.

2. There is a mixed multitude at the espousals, but not so at the marriage. Many put their hands to the pen, and sign the contract, who are not divorced from their other lovers; but there the door is shut, and none but chaste virgins admitted.

3. The bridegroom appears beautiful at the espousals, but far more beautiful at the marriage, for then they shall see him as he is, and shall say, the half has not been told.

4. The bride contracts with him in a sorry state, giving away herself to him, that he may make her beautiful. But at the marriage, the bride shall be adorned, not only with a perfect imputed righeousness, but also with a perfect inherent righteousness. The Lamb's wife shall then "have made herself ready, and shall appear

arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." No spot, no wrinkle in the bride, but she shall be holy, and without blemish.

5. Many a time, the bride at the espousals gives away herself to Christ with sorrow in her heart, tears in her eyes, and with a trembling hand signs the contract, for fear she mismanage it, or that the bridegroom will not take her, but then all these things shall be gone. "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

6. At the espousals, the bride sometimes gets some little gifts to rejoice her heart; but then she shall get a fulness of joy, of which she is not now capable.

Lastly, After the espousals she is in hazard. There are many to attempt her chastity now, but after the marriage she shall never be in hazard any more.

Use 1. Remember that I have espoused you to Christ, and that now you are no more your own but his. There was a solemn day of espousals to Christ here, last Sabbath, and then we got you espoused to our Master. Let us reflect on this a little.

1. Was there not an offer of Christ, made to all communicants and hearers, in Simprin kirk, and Simprin byre, that day. Were you not told he was willing, and it should be a bargain, if you were willing also.

2. Was there any one in either of the places of worship, that said they would not take him? Did any say we have loved idols, and will go after them? Did you not sit and stand there as his people? Why did you crowd in, was it to protest against Christ, we heard no such thing; Nay, did not your heart say within you, even so I take him.

3. Did we not bring out the contract to you and read it, that you might know what you were doing? Did you not hear the articles, that you behoved to part with sin and the world? and yet after all there were none of you said that you were against the bargain.

4. Did we not put the pen into the hands of many of you, gave you the bread and wine, the symbols of Christ's body and blood? Christ was exhibited in that sacrament. Wherefore was it, but that you might subscribe the contract.

Lastly, Did we not see you sign the contract, give away yourselves to Christ, and take the sacrament of his body and blood upon it? Witness then, O heavens! witness O earth! witness O angels! Be ye witnesses, O stones and wood of Simprin kirk and byre, and we ourselves are witnesses, that upon the second day of February, 1707, we espoused this people unto our Master Christ.

Use 2. And now I have but one request to you. Behave in such a manner, as you may be presented as a chaste virgin, to Christ the bridegroom, at the great day. "Little children keep yourselves from

idols." Keep the chief room in your heart for Christ, and let not your garments again be defiled. Consider, last Sabbath you were beginning a work for eternity, why did you consent to the espousals, if you have not a mind for the marriage; and surely you cannot think to go a-whoring from your espoused husband, unless you mind never to be presented to him for the marriage. Alas! I fear we will lose of our account, when the day comes for presenting the bride. Suppose you heard Christ, at that day, say to us, What! did you espouse no more to me, than these? and us to answer, Lord, we espoused many more to thee, but they afterwards went back to their lusts, now they are amissing, and we dare not present them, because they have not kept chaste.

Objection. Alas! it is impossible for us to keep free of sin. Answer. It is not every slip that will denominate you unchaste. Let it be the constant bent of your souls to keep faithful to Christ. Struggle against sin; and if you do, though it may prevail, yet it shall not prevent your acceptance, while you flee to the blood of Christ. You may say with David, "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Remember the case of the betrothed damsel, Deut. xxii. 25, 26. Amen.

Galashiels, Saturday, September 21, 1723.

SERVING THE LORD IN HOLINESS.

SERMON III.

Luke i. 74, 75,

That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

The covenant of grace is the great contrivance for salvation to lost sinners; it is the chariot in which Christ carries home his bride to his Father's house in heaven, Song iii. 9, 10. The gospel is the proclamation, and free offer of this covenant to all. Faith is the taking hold of this covenant, the embracing it, the sinner's personal entering into it, the coming up into the chariot. The sacraments are the seals of this covenant. Our text is the import and substance of this covenant, shewing what is offered to you all in the

gospel; to be believed and applied by you all, to yourselves, through faith; and what shall be sealed to you all, who believe, in the sacrament. "Even that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered," &c.

This covenant is a sworn covenant, vers. 72, 73, that poor sinners, who have a mind for it, may have strong consolation, to balance their strong doubts and fears. But to whom? To Abraham, ver. 73, as a type of Christ; that is really to Jesus Christ, the true Abraham, the true father of the multitude of the faithful, who at God's call left heaven, his native country, and came and sojourned among the cursed race of mankind, and there offered up his own flesh and blood, a sacrifice unto God. And so became the true heir of the world, and received the promises for his spiritual seed, whereof this is the sum, "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered," &c. Compare Genesis xxii. 16—18. Of which passage, our text is an inspired paraphrase. There are two things in the text to which we shall at present attend, and afterwards take a particular view of the other parts of it.

I. The conveyance made in this covenant, "That he would grant unto us," &c.

II. The benefits secured to us in this conveyance. Let us then attend:

I. To the conveyance made in this covenant. In this, two things may be observed.

1. The parties in whose favour this conveyance is made. Us, the seed of Abraham. The Father has solemnly engaged to the Son, that these shall be delivered and serve him. Objection. What comfort is this to us sinners of the Gentiles? Answer. "If you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Therefore believe on Christ this day; believe the promises, and so be his, and you are secured for time and eternity. Objection. But I fear I am none of the spiritual seed, the elect in whose favour that covenant conveyance is made. How then can I believe, and apply the promises to myself? Answer. The original copyof the covenant of promises was filled up from all eternity, and signed by the Father, and the Son as the second Adam, and remains locked up in the cabinet of heaven. And in this question, whether you shall believe or not; none would order you to call for a sight of the original copy, to see if your name be there, but the enemy of your salvation; nor would even he order you, if he did not know very well that a sight of it you cannot have, till you have believed. His designs, then, is to keep you from believing. But there is a double of it in the gospel, subscribed also by the Father, and the Son

as second Adam, in which all the promises are indefinitely proposed to all that hear it, and as it were a blank left in the body of it, in which every one that will, may fill up his own name. So in this gospel, the covenant is held out to you all, as heaven's blank bond for grace and glory, that whosoever will, may fill his own name in it, by applying the same to himself in the way of believing.

2. The manner of the conveyance. It is by way of grant or gift, for so the word is. But observe the gift is to us, and so it is to be understood in respect of us, to be a free gift. In respect of the Lord Jesus, it is not so. All the benefits of the covenant, to be bestowed on his spiritual seed, are made over to him on a valuable consideration. The covenant to him is a covenant of sale, in which he obtains such and such things, for his, because he hath paid the price of them. "We were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from our vain conversation, received by tradition from our fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." To the Lord Jesus it is a covenant of service, in which the benefits of it are made over to him, because he worked for them, Gen. xxii. 16. God gives us to serve our Redeemer, because Christ served him perfectly in our room and stead. The covenant is to him a disposition of these things for us, upon a most onerous cause, namely, "because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

But in respect of us, these things stand quite otherwise. The grant to us is of mere free gift, absolutely of free grace. All the blessings of grace are so, and glory is so likewise. From the foundation stone of our salvation, to the copestone of it, we must cry grace, grace, unto it. For the whole building, and every stone of the building, is of grace. And the putting the crown of glory on the heads of the saints, after all their wrestling and fighting against their spiritual enemies, after all their holy obedience, and life spent in the practice of good works, is as purely of free grace, as the giving them the first grace, as the quickening of them when dead in sins is. "For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever." "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

What then should hinder any poor soul that has a mind for God's covenant of free grace, to embrace it this day? Should it hinder you to embrace it, because you cannot get any tolerable management of the corruptions of your base heart, because you cannot work, nor do any thing right in the service of God? No,

no. We may tell you with confidence, here you are to work nothing, to do nothing; but only by believing, to receive the full treasure of the covenant, held out to you in the gospel, to be received freely. And more than that, that day shall never dawn on you, in which you shall be able to work, or do the least work to purpose, until you have embraced the covenant for grace, with which to work and do. It would be a promising token among our communicants and others, if they were all coming to Christ and his covenant, to get their broken arms set, and strengthened for work, by the grace of the covenant. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Let us now attend,

II. To the benefits secured to us in this conveyance, even the sum of the benefits of the covenant of grace.

These are of two sorts: *First*, the principal benefit, serving the Lord. *Second*, The subordinate benefit, deliverance from our enemies.

First, The principal benefit, which stands here under the notion of the end, namely, serving the Lord. "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him." This is the great thing promised in the covenant of grace, even as it was the great thing required in the covenant of works, as the condition of it. This is it that was purchased by Christ, and is promised to poor sinners who believe in him, for his sake, namely, that God will give them to serve him. And thus our serving God is the great benefit of the covenant, bestowed on believers, for Christ's sake.

O that men would learn this lesson, that any service we do to God, if right service, it is a benefit of the covenant, bestowed on us, for Christ's sake. Then would they learn that God is not debtor unto them for it, but they are debtors to free grace on that very account. And the more they do for God, and the better that they do it, they are always the deeper in debt to free grace. Ephes. ii. 8, 9, 10.

Then would they also learn, that the only way for a sinner to be brought to serve the Lord, is to embrace the covenant for that very end; and that they are not to embrace it because they have served the Lord, as ignorant and unhumbled sinners are apt to do: but to embrace the covenant, that they may be made to serve the Lord. "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come."

This benefit of the covenant, that we might serve him, imports three things:

1. The privilege of God's service. God is a master of infinite glory and power, so that to be admitted into his service is the greatest privilege. How do men value themselves, in that they are of an earthly king's household, servants to one who wears a crown? But what a small thing is that, in comparison of this, to be the fellows of angels, in being taken into the service of Jehovah the Lord of heaven and earth. It is a great part of heaven's happiness. "For there his servants shall serve him." Man lost this service by his fall, but God, for Christ's sake, has granted to sinners to be taken into it again, and that in a more honourable station than innocent Adam had, that is, no more as hired, but as honorary servants.

2. Strength and ability for his service. And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord." Man, by his breach of the first covenant, lost his strength for serving the Lord, so that whosoever of you are without the covenant, you cannot serve the Lord. "And Joshua said unto the people, ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God: he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." "He that abideth in me, and I in him," saith Jesus, "the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." Thus in the new covenant, there is a promise of strength for this service, which is bestowed on all that believe, of mere free grace for the sake of Christ. "For his grace is sufficient for us, and his strength is made perfect in weakness."

3. Acceptance of the service. "Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." Whatever they do in God's service, who are without the covenant, it is, in point of acceptance, as if it were not done at all. God rejects them and their services too. For they can do nothing right nor pleasing in the sight of God. For without faith it is impossible to please God. But the new covenant is the ministration of the spirit, fitting the soul for service, and has a promise of acceptance of our service, though it be imperfect, for Christ's sake.

Well then, would ye be admitted into God's service, have strength for it, and acceptance of your services, look to the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, for these things. Embrace and rely on the promise of the covenant for all these things by faith, which promise

is held forth to you in the gospel. And they shall be sealed to you in the sacrament, and made forthcoming to you, in virtue of the faithfulness of God.

Concerning this covenant service, two things are further to be remarked. *First*, the kind. *Secondly*, the qualities of it.

1. The kind of service to God, in which sinners are instated by the covenant of grace; for there is a great difference of services. Now,

1. This is not bond service, the service of slaves, who work their work for fear of their master's whip. The Spirit of God hath purposely abstained here from using the very word that signifies that kind of service. It is not serving God for fear of hell and revenging wrath. That is the first covenant service, indeed, being broken; but not the second covenant service, which is to serve God without fear, namely slavish fear. The covenant of grace finds all men in the state of bond service, and was contrived to bring us out of it, through Christ's being a bondman in our stead. "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, in our stead. Wherefore we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father."

2. It is not hired service, so much work for so much wages. The text tells us, that the service is so far from being hired, that it is a free grace gift made to sinners for Christ's sake. "That he would grant unto us, that we might serve him." It is true there is an ample reward follows the service of the saints. But both the service and reward are of grace; and the reward, properly and strictly speaking, is rather the reward of the service of their head Christ, than of the service of their hands. But,

3. It is an honorary service. So the word used by the Holy Ghost, in the text, signifies to minister, which is an honorary kind of service, such as kings and priests had when put into their office. Thus Christ hath made his people kings and priests unto God. They are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ. So that this service, bestowed on sinners through Jesus Christ, according to the covenant, is their unspeakable advancement, their real happiness, to which they could never have been preferred, but by means of the blood of the covenant. It is a post of the greatest honour of which the sinner is capable. And this also is imported in the phrase, before him, which is an Old Testament phrase used of those in the courts of kings who waited on the king's person; Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

This may direct you in your approach to the Lord's table, to lay

hold on the covenant; not to go about to turn that solemn action into the making of a bargain with God, that if he will save you, and give you heaven, you will serve him all your life. Alas! poor creature, what have you to serve him with, that you will pretend to make such a bargain with him? But here is a covenant of honorary service to God, bearing a promise also of strength for the service, freely offered and exhibited to you in the word of the gospel, under the great seal of Heaven. Believe it cordially; accept of it; lay the weight of your desired and designed service to God upon it; and it is a bargain, and shall be sealed by the sacrament. Let us now attend,

2dly, To the qualities of the service. They are these:

1. It is universal, which the service of these remaining under the first covenant never is. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." We are to serve him in holiness and righteousness. These answer to the whole holy law as a rule of life. In holiness, serving him in first table duties; in righteousness, serving him in second table duties. Both of them relating to the inward, as well as the outward man, bearing a holy and righteous frame of heart, as well as holy and righteous actions, as serving before him, that is, as under his eye, sincerely and uprightly. Here then is the true way to get heart and life purified; to get an irregular life, in a profession of religion, made uniform. That grace is held forth in the covenant, which you are to embrace for sanctification, as well as justification. And it is a full covenant for that purpose, as for all other purposes of salvation.

2. It is a perpetual and lasting service. The first covenant required a lasting service, but secured not man from breaking the service. But the second covenant secures the perpetuity of the service, that however fickle the believer is, yet he shall serve the Lord all the days of his life. This imports two things: 1. That he shall serve the Lord as long as he lives in this world, and shall never be either put away, nor break away from the blessed service. The covenant shall keep him, if he cannot keep it. "I will," says God, "make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." By this covenant, God takes home sinners to his service, never to part for the term of life. Oh! is not this a blessed bargain, for one who is groaning under the weight of a vain, fickle, inconstant heart. Come into it then, joyfully and confidently. Here is heaven's security for the keeping of it. Then look to the Lord in his covenant this day, and

say, Lord, into thine hands, stretched out in this covenant, I commit my spirit. 2. It imports that he shall serve the Lord for ever and ever, in heaven, after death. To confine the great benefit of the covenant to this short life here, is unsuitable to the everlasting covenant. Nay, this benefit contains heaven's happiness. For in heaven his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. There it is that it hath its full accomplishment. The covenant finds the designed servants dead in sin, and therefore it must give them life before they can serve; and that life is eternal life, never to expire, from the moment it is given. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" and they shall serve him all the days of that life, given them on purpose for the service, that is, through the ages of eternity.

Comfort yourselves, O believers, with this, ye that are depressed with a sense of your unfitness for the service of God here, and your mismanagement in it. Behold, the day of your redemption approacheth, in which you shall be able to serve God, according to your desire, in the mount of glory. We are now to consider,

Secondly, The subordinate benefit, namely, deliverance from our enemies, which stands here as a mean in order to the end, namely, God's service. "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him." It is evident from the structure of the words, both in our version, and in the original especially, that the service is the end of the deliverance, and the deliverance the means of the service. As God said of Israel in Egypt, so doth he say of all his people; "Let my son go, that he may serve me." To this event our text alludes. They cannot serve the Lord till once they be delivered. How should they do it, while they are lying among the feet of their enemies. The service, the enemies, and the deliverance, are all spiritual; therefore they must have a spiritual deliverance, before they can perform the spiritual service. And if it is the design of the covenant, that they shall work and serve the Lord, it must secure and convey to them salvation or deliverance, in the first place; so this is a benefit of the covenant, as well as the others are.

This may also direct you in your management of this solemn occasion of grace and salvation.

1. If ever you would be capable to serve the Lord, seek that you may be delivered from your spiritual enemies, taken out of their hands who keep you in bondage. While you are in bondage to them, in respect of your state, it is not possible you can serve the Lord. "No man can serve two masters."

2. If ever you would obtain that deliverance from your spiritual

enemies, seek it in the covenant, in a way of believing. There it is offered and exhibited to you; and whosoever does by faith lay hold on this covenant shall have it. So the Son makes them free, who believe on him, as their deliverer, from all their enemies. "And if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed."

Lastly, Seek that deliverance, that you may serve the Lord. Many seek deliverance by Christ, that they may live at ease in the embraces of their lusts, free from the fear of hell. But none shall ever find it so, for they seek it not in the right way, and for the right end.

Galashiels, Sunday Afternoon, September 22, 1723.

[The same subject continued.]

SERMON IV.

LUKE i. 74, 75,

That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

DOCTRINE—That the covenant deliverance is freely bestowed on God's covenant people, that they may serve him, after the manner of the covenant, namely the new covenant. Here I shall take notice,

I. Of the covenant deliverance bestowed.

II. Of the covenant service, which is the design of this deliverance.

III. Of the necessary connection betwixt the covenant deliverance, and covenant service.

I. The covenant deliverance bestowed. We being delivered out of the hands of our enemies. I shall reduce these to four.

1. They are delivered from the law. Not from the law as a rule of life in the hand of a Mediator, standing in the covenant of grace; but from the law as a covenant, under which all men are, in their natural state. The scripture is most express on this. Rom. vi. 14, 15. They are delivered from the curse of it. It cannot reach them. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." From the commanding power of it. For how

can it have a commanding power over them who are not under it? It was the fault of the Galatians, that some of them desired to be under it. Did they desire, think you, to be under the curse of it? No, surely, but under the commanding power of it. Not observing, that if once they were under the commanding power of it, they should be under the cursing power of it also; since whom the law cannot command, it can, and certainly will curse, in case of transgression, Gal. iii. 10, compared with Rom. iii. 19. But they are as completely freed from it, as death can make a wife free from her husband. "They are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that they should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

2. From sin. Though they are not free from the indwelling of it in this life, and molestation by it, yet they are freed from its guilt of eternal wrath, by which it binds over the sinner to the revenging wrath of God. "There is therefore now no condemnatian to them that are in Christ Jesus." The covenant secures believers as much against that recurring on them, as God's oath secures the world from a second deluge. "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I should not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." They are freed also from the dominion of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." The bond by which it held the sinner, was strong as death; but it is broken so as never to be joined again. "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

3. From death. Though they are not free from that shadow of death, that nominal death, which serves to separate the believer's soul from his body for a while, therefore called the death of the body; yet they are delivered from the real death of the man, even that terrible thing wrapt up in the threatening of the covenant of works, which was the penalty of it. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Even stinged death, universal death, which alone is death, properly so called; as appears in the case of the body, in which though a leg or arm, a member or members, be mortified as dead as if they were in the grave; yet none will reckon the body a dead corpse, but still a living body, till such time as death hath gone over the whole of it. Now as soon as man sinned by breaking the covenant of works, death's sting pierced him to the very soul; cold death went over the whole man, and left him speechless, motionless, and lifeless, as to any thing truly good. And the whole creation could not raise the dead man to life again.

Now from this death God's covenant people are delivered. "Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ." This is in virtue of their union with Christ. They may now sing, "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin: and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Christ." And it shall never, never from the moment of their entering into the covenant, come back upon them again. Our Lord's words are, Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

Lastly, From Satan, though not from molestation by him in this life; yet from under his power and dominion. God sends the gospel "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus." When man sinned, and death seized him, he was Satan's lawful captive; Is. xlix. 24. Satan having the power of death as executioner, Jesus our Saviour, took our nature, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." But now believers are delivered from him, "for God hath delivered them from the power of darkness, and translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son." Satan shall never recover his power over them, "for the God of peace shall bruise him under their feet shortly." And so shall all the other parts of the delivery not yet bestowed on them, be shortly given them, and so the deliverance be completed. Let us now,

II. Take notice of the covenant service, which is the design of this deliverance; and not only the design of the deliverance, but also of the deliverer; which, therefore, shall certainly take effect in the delivered. I take it up in three things, according to the text. They shall serve the Lord,

1. As sons serving their Father. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son who serveth him." Possibly they made a fashion of serving the Lord, before they came into a covenant of grace. But then their service was after the manner of the covenant which they were under. They served him as bond servants. Slavish fear of hell, and servile hope of heaven, being the great springs of their obedience. But now they will serve him, in a new manner, even in "newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Love to their Father will set them to work. The whole with them is "a work and labour of love." Gratitude to their God and Redeemer, will bind them to

it. They ever cry, "what shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits towards us. They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." Meanwhile, they depend entirely on Christ's work and service, not on their own, for the whole of their salvation. "For we," say they, "are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

2. They shall serve him universally. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments." The old covenant servants are ever partial in the law. There is not one of them but discovers what spirit they are of, by baulking some of its commandments. Wherefore, if our obedience be not more extensive than theirs, we will never see heaven. "For except our righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." But the new covenant servants "esteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right." Their religion will neither lack piety nor charity. They will be holy towards God, righteous toward their neighbour, and sober with respect to themselves. They will serve the Lord internally and externally. They desire to know, and to comply with all God's will, that, like David the son of Jesse, they may fulfil all his will.

3. They will serve him constantly. "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end." They shall never totally nor finally fall away from their service. The old covenant servants are still breaking away from their service, for the spirit of old Adam, a spirit of apostacy, reigns in them, and "leads them to draw back to perdition." But new covenant servants are not of this kind. (Greek,) we are not of defection, but of faith, even "of them that believe to the saving of the soul," Heb. x. 39.

The new covenant servants once entered home to their service, never change masters again, but will hold by their new master while they live. And the reason of the difference is, the former are bond servants, the latter filial servants. "Now the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the son abideth ever." Now remember he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. Let us,

III. Show the necessary connection betwixt the covenant deliverance and covenant service.

1. None can serve the Lord in this right manner, till once in the

first place, they are delivered as said is, no more than a dead corpse can rise and serve you. Eph. ii. 1—10. You will not, I think, question the truth of this, with respect to the dominion of sin, death, and the devil; but will readily grant there can be no true serving of God, till once a soul is delivered from these. But as to the soul's deliverance from the law and sin's guilt of eternal wrath, perhaps you observe not the necessity of being delivered from them, before we can thus serve the Lord. But truly, according to the scriptures, these four things, are four links of one chain, each holding fast another, and all together, holding fast the poor sinner, that he cannot serve the Lord.

Wherein lies the power of the devil over a man? It lies in death. He hath the power of death, Heb. ii. 14, and by it he holds the man fast. So there is no getting out of the devil's hold without loosing the bands of death, and delivering from its power.

In what lies the sting and strength of death? It lies in sin. "The sting of death is sin." In the guilt of sin primarily, by which the soul is bound over to death. So there is no getting out of death's chains, without loosing the band of sin, namely its guilt of eternal wrath.

Now in what lies the strength of sin? It lies in the law. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." By this the guilt of eternal wrath is fixed on the sinner, that moment he transgresses its commandments. So there is no getting out of the chains of sin, without loosing the band of the law from off the sinner.

So that while a poor sinner is under the law, namely as a covenant he is under sin; while under sin, he is under death; while under death, he is under the power of the devil: So he cannot serve the Lord, while under the law as a covenant, Romans vii. 5, 6.

2. The soul being once thus delivered, will certainly serve the Lord, "in holiness and righteousness before him." The deliverance will infallibly produce the service; and that both from the design of God, which cannot misgive; he delivering them for that very end; as also from the nature of the thing, whereby the bands of death are removed, and a new life given, which must exert itself in actions agreeable to the nature of it.

Use 1. The sanctification of sinners is the chief subordinate end of the covenant of grace, or of the gospel, standing next to the glory of God. And faith, justification, deliverance from the law, sin, death, and the devil, are subordinated to sanctification, as means for reaching that end. Therefore the covenant hath its full perfec-

tion, or accomplishment in heaven, when the man is so sanctified as to serve God perfectly, and work perfectly good works. Wherefore, invert not the order of God's covenant, in seeking deliverance by your works. But make use of God's covenant, and the covenant daily, for the deliverance, that you may be holy, and may perform good works.

USE 2. They in whom the spirit of legalism, hypocrisy, and apostacy reigns, have no part nor lot in this matter.

Lastly, As ever you would evidence yourselves God's covenant people, partakers of this deliverance, serve no more the devil, and your own lusts. But serve the Lord as his children, universally, and constantly, "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of your life." Amen.

Ettrick, Sabbath Afternoon.

THE LEADING PRIVILEGE OF THEM THAT KNOW THE JOYFUL SOUND.

SERMON. V.

PSALM lxxxix. 15,

They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.

HERE begins the account of the happiness of those that know the joyful sound of the gospel. They have many special privileges, and this is the leading one, "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

Here is first their motion at the joyful sound. The gospel is a sound for motion and and action. They that know it not sit still, no moving heaven-wards by them: but they that know it are quickened by it, they are set on a march, and go forward. They will walk on, and walk vigorously, as the word imports, through the several steps in the wilderness journey. We have next the advantage which they may have from the joyful sound for their walking. "They shall walk in the light of thy countenance." Light is a great help to walking on a journey. It is neither safe nor comfortable to walk in the dark. They shall walk in the light of the Lord's countenance, or face, which is more lightsome to those that know it, than the united light of sun, moon, and stars. They

shall have the sunny side of the brae, of all the rest of the world. Their way shall be a Goshen for light, while others sit in Egyptian darkness.

The Psalmist's directing his speech to God here, shows his firm confidence as to the thing, and how much his own heart was set upon enjoying that privilege.

DOCTRINE.—As men know and believe the joyful sound of the gospel, so shall they walk on their way heavenward, in the light of the Lord's countenance. In prosecuting this, I shall,

I. Consider the duty to which the joyful sound known and believed, effectually excites men. They shall walk.

II. I shall consider the privilege which they that know the joyful sound, shall thereby have, in their walk heavenwards. I am then,

I. To consider the duty to which the joyful sound known and believed, effectually excites men. They shall walk.

1. They shall not sit still, doing nothing to purpose for God and their immortal souls, like the rest of the world, dead in trespasses and sins. The sound of the gospel is the most powerful of all alarms. The law may terrify a sinner; yea it may toss a dead soul, as a dead corpse is tossed hither and thither in the earth by an earthquake, but can never put life into it. It is not a mean appointed by God for that end. It is the ministration of death and condemnation, not of life, 2 Cor. v. 7—8. But the joyful sound of the gospel, quickens the dead sinner to a spiritual life. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." And this life will exert itself in its proper actions, namely, in holy obedience. So they have not known the joyful sound, who are not excited to walk on the way heavenward. The unholy are without doubt unbelievers.

2. They shall not go back to their former lusts in their ignorance. Apostates were never true believers. "If any man draw back," says God, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." "But," says Paul, "we are not of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul." It was those among the Israelites, that believed not, that were for making a captain, and going back to Egypt. They looked on the promise of Canaan, as a thing that would not hold, and therefore they would see to themselves otherwise. Thus do many bewray their unbelief of the gospel, by a greedy return to the world and their lusts after a communion, looking upon the world as a thing certain, and what is in the promise as a thing uncertain and distant.

3. They shall hold forward in their way in spite of all opposition,

and not give over till they get to the journey's end, whatever weather blow. "The righteous also, shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." The faith of the gospel is the spring of perseverance, according to that saying, "the just shall live by his faith;" and unbelief is the great cause of apostacy. It is "the evil heart of unbelief that leads men to depart from the living God." It was the unbelief of the spies, and of those who credited them, that made their carcases fall in the wilderness; while Caleb and Joshua believed the joyful sound of the promise, and got safe to Canaan. Faith makes a man righteous in the sight of God, and so frees him of the burden of the curse, and guilt of eternal wrath. And sooner shall a prisoner laden with irons, make his way up a steep hill, and not fall by the way, than an unjustified sinner setting out in God's way, shall hold on. Faith listening to the joyful sound, inspires the soul with new vigour. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

Lastly, They shall walk on in the sight of the Lord, as he who walketh in the light, walks in the sight of the sun. "Walk before me," said God unto Abram, "and be thou perfect." Faith believing the gospel, calls the name of the Lord, speaking to the sinner, "Thou, God, seest me;" as Hagar did in another case, Gen. xvi. 13. They will walk before him as under his eye, considering him as the witness to all their actions, and who will be their judge. While unbelievers forget him, and have little or no regard to his all-seeing eye, and all-hearing ear. We now proceed,

II. To consider the privileges which they that know and believe the joyful sound, shall thereby have in their walk heaven-wards: "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

1. They shall be ever in a state of favour, peace, and reconciliation with God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." God is no more their enemy, but they are in inviolable friendship with him. The darkness of a natural state is over with them, and shall never return. The true light is come, the sun of righteousness is risen on them, in the joyful sound known and believed, and shall never go down on them again. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of the light."

2. No cloud of revenging wrath shall ever gather above their heads any more, no curse of the law, no guilt of eternal wrath. Such a cloud would extinguish the light of the Lord's countenance, for the time it staid, and reduce them, for the time, to the state of

enmity and wrath, in which they were, before they knew the joyful sound. The joyful sound of the everlasting covenant, secures them for ever, against all such clouds returning after the rain of revenging wrath, poured out on Christ, in their room and stead. "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; saith the Lord: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee."

3. Whatever cloud may gather above their head in their way heavenward, it shall never be so thick, but the light of the Lord's countenance shall shine through it, Psal. lxxxix. 31—34. Though God will never resume the face of a wrathful revenging judge against them, yet he may be an angry Father, and they may be under clouds of fatherly anger. But in the blackest of all these, there are rays of love and favour to be seen. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. As many," saith he, "as I love, I rebuke and chasten." The sharpest arrows shot against them, shall be winged with love; and their bitterest potions shall be medicinal. Though the light of the Lord's countenance do not always shine alike full upon them, it shall never, in their darkest hours, suffer a total eclipse.

4. They shall be directed in their way. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." They walk through a wilderness, where ofttimes it is hard to know the right way, where there are many to lead them out of the way. But the Lord will be eyes to them in the wilderness. Listening to the joyful sound, they shall hear a voice behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." The way through the world is so filled with stumbling blocks, that they who have not this light, cannot escape to fall over them and perish. But they shall walk in the light and be directed in their way. "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

5. They shall be strengthened in their way, for this light is the light of life. Solomon observes, "that in the light of the king's countenance is life, and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain." How much more in the light of the Lord's countenance, is there life and refreshment. The joyful sound of the gospel, known and believed, brings a strengthening light with it. "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Many a time hath the child of God, by this

means, out of weakness been made strong; and upon the tasting of the sweetness of the word of promise, been made to say as Jonathan, in another case, "See, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey."

Lastly, They shall be cheered and comforted in their way. Solomon tells us, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." But no such sweetness, no such comfort in any light, as in the light of the Lord's countenance lifted upon a soul. David witnesseth it from his experience. "There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. None can keep the way heavenward, but they will meet with many things from within and from without, tending to their discouragement. But God has secured their comfort in the way of believing, and the faith of the gospel will carry them comfortably through under the heaviest burdens, Heb. xi.

Use I. Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. Whence it is that many communicants are nothing bettered by gospel ordinances, but even go away as they come, a prey to their lusts and an evil world. They sit down to the feast, but they rise not up to the journey. They eat, but they are not refreshed, nor strengthened to their proper work after a communion. Why? Alas! they never get into the saving knowledge of the joyful sound. They are ever learning, but they never come to the knowledge of the truth. They hear it, but they do not believe it. They believe it not with application to themselves. Hence it hath no quickening, nor sanctifying influence on them. They go away morally serious, to ply their duty, and to reform their life. But not having the faith of the promises of the gospel, the only channel of spiritual life and strength, they are like a soldier going to the battle without his weapons, who presently gives back. Take heed then, brethren, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

2. Whence it is that many of the saints are so weak, and comfortless in their way heavenward, walking so much in the dark. It is all owing to the small measure of their faith of the joyful sound. Whatever be the hard pieces of work put into the hand of any of the Lord's people, whatever be their temptations, trials, and afflictions, there is as much in the joyful sound, as if it were plentifully brought into the soul by a lively faith, would make them go through all these, like a giant refreshed with wine. And the Lord said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this syca-

mine tree, be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you."

3. That the faith of the gospel is the sovereign remedy in all darkness and distresses, in which a person can be. Believing is a duty that can never be out of season. This is the way to bring one out of darkness into the light. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. The promises of the gospel are full of suitable help for all diseases and distempers; and faith is the mouth of the soul, whereby applying the promise to one's self, the nourishment contained in it is brought into the soul. "The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him." If then thou art in desertion, temptation, or affliction, go to the promise and embrace it by faith.

4. Hence learn whether you have a right to the seal of the gospel covenant or not. All Christ's sheep have this ear mark. They know the joyful sound. "My sheep," says he, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." They have discerned it as the voice of the living God. The gospel is the savour of life unto them. They have been let into the kernel of it, while others break their teeth upon the shell. "For our gospel," says Paul, "came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost. and in much assurance." It has not been always to them a dry channel, a dead letter, but the ministration of the spirit of faith and holiness to them. "Therefore," says the apostle Peter, "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The Lord has drawn aside the vail, and they have seen the hidden beauty of it; opened the cabinet, and discovered the treasure there.

Again, they savour it as the suitable nourishment for their souls. "They know it is not a vain thing for them, because it is their life." As living creatures have their proper nourishment, so one delights in what another cares not for. The new creature is nourished by the gospel, and it is natural, for the saints had their life by it. "They have been born again of incorruptible seed, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." So they have a peculiar savour of it, while others regard it no more than the dogs do hay.

Once more all their hopes are in it. "It is all their salvation and all their desire. They have been beaten off from hopes in the law, in their own works, doings, sufferings and services: and have betaken themselves to the word of God's grace, as the only anchor of

their souls. And all their doings and sufferings, are to them in that point, as if they had done just nothing. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

QUESTION.—The stony ground hearers received the word with joy. How then shall we distinguish betwixt that, and the true knowledge of the joyful sound, the genuine savour of the gospel of God's grace?

1. The true convert receives the joyful sound of the gospel, as the most joyful sound for him, overcoming and overpowering all others, and therefore rests his heart there. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart." It contains the one thing that is to him the main thing, and instead of all other things. The hypocrite may receive it as a joyful sound, but yet there is still some sound more joyful to him. The bleating of sheep, and lowing of oxen, is a more joyful sound to some; the sound of created comforts, is more taking with the most part, than all the comforts of the gospel. Christ may be sweet to a hypocrite, but the mischief is, still some hue lust or other is sweeter. So like Orpah, they leave him, not without some affection to him.

2. The convert gets his savour of the gospel, by finding the extreme bitterness of sin. Like those who heard Peter and the rest of the apostles, "they have been pricked in their heart, and made to say, men and brethren, what shall we do? Others come more easily by theirs. Like the stony ground hearers, they at once receive it with joy. Many savour the sweetness of the gospel, to whom sin either never was made bitter; or if it was, yet never the bitterest of all things; so their saviour of the gospel is but superficial. But God makes his own feel sin more and more bitter, till it become of all bitters the most bitter, even more bitter than death. And then they know to purpose, the sweetness of the joyful sound.

Lastly, The convert savours the whole of the joyful sound. There is always some one note or other in it, that an unsound heart savours not. They have not respect to all God's commandments. They that know the joyful sound, savour it for sanctification, as well as for justification; for the cross as well as the crown. But many are like Herod, who heard it gladly, till his beloved lust was touched.

USE 2. Of exhortation. Believers, you that know the joyful sound, bless God for what your ears do hear, and for what your eyes do see. Seek for more of this blessedness. As ever ye would walk on your way heavenward, safely and comfortably, labour more and more to know the joyful sound; and to know it so as to believe it; and to believe it, so as to apply it to your own souls, according to your several exigencies. Consider,

1. It is too precious and dear bought a sound, to be neglected by poor sinners. It had never been heard in the world, had not the son of God in our nature purchased it by his sufferings and death. There was a dreadful sound of a deluge of wrath falling on him, which made him to groan out his soul on the cross. And had not that been, this had never been. Wo to them to whom it will be a fruitless sound.

2. It is a sound which has the matter of all joy in it, to be drawn forth in the way of believing. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the holy Ghost." It comprehends the whole covenant, with all the benefits thereof, which are suited to all the necessities of a soul, for time and eternity. The gospel is the offer and exhibiting of all to you, the setting before you the whole covenant of promises, and declaring you welcome to intermeddle, take possession of, and use them for your own behoof. They will perish miserably, who perish under such a full covenant table, because they will not put out their hand to take it.

3. It is a sound that will not sound always in your ears. If death come on before ye know it, ye can never know it more. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." In hell it is not to be heard, therefore the light of the Lord's countenance can never rise there; but they are wrapt up there, in the blackness of darkness for ever. The Sinai trumpet will sound for ever most dreadfully through all the corners of that dark vault; but not the least whisper of Zion's trumpet.

Lastly, It is both your duty and interest to know it. There is no saving knowledge of God but by it, for by the gospel only we know him in the face of Jesus. The faith of it is the way of sanctification, "we are sanctified by faith which is in Christ Jesus." And it is the way of solid comfort, "we are filled with joy and peace in believing." And the more a person has of the faith of the gospel, he will be the more holy, and the more joyful in the Lord.

Wherefore study the gospel of Christ, and cry for the Spirit to cause you know it. Christ is a veiled Saviour, and the gospel is a veiled gospel to many. It is hid to them that are lost. If you do not believe it, it will be worse for you than if you had never heard it. Cry then for the Spirit, and for God to reveal Christ in your hearts, the hope and the earnest of glory. Amen.

Ettrick, May 4. 1707.

[First Sabbath after my Admission.]

THE LORD'S HELPING HIS PEOPLE.

SERMON VI.

1 SAMUEL vii. 12.

Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

IF we look back to the former chapter, we find Israel brought to a very low state. By the sword of the Philistines, chap. iv. 10, thirty thousand footmen were slain; and by the sword of the Lord, chap. vi 19, "Fifty thousand and threescore and ten men were smitten." After this the ark was brought to Kirjath-jearim, a city of the Levites in the tribe of Judah. There it remained till David brought it up, 2 Samuel. vi. Psal. cxxxii. Only it was twenty years there, ere the children of Israel lamented after the Lord, chap. vii. 2. Now Israel was in a great strait; the Philistines were strong and could not be resisted; God angry and would not be entreated; they lamented after him but found him not. In this sad case Samuel adviseth them to deep humiliation and a complete reformation, vers. 3—5. They fall in with his advice in some measure, vers. 4—6. They gather for humiliation and fasting in Mizpeh, a city on the borders of Benjamin and Judah, lying in the heart of the country, and so proper for such a meeting. The Philistines are alarmed at this, looking upon it as a rendezvous of rebellion, and so bring an army against Israel. It is well they were found at their duty, which was a good pledge of the Lord's help. While Samuel is sacrificing and praying, the Philistines draw near to battle, and God himself takes the cause in hand, thunders against the enemy, so that Israel had nothing more to do but to pursue, ver. 10, 11.

The text gives us an account of the setting up of a monument of this great victory and glorious deliverance. The monument itself is a stone set up. A stone is a most durable substance, and very proper to perpetuate the memory of this glorious victory. The person who set it up was Samuel, that is, it was set up by his order and direction. He was their Prophet and their Judge. By his

means especially was the victory procured; and he is careful to set up this monument of thankfulness. The place where it was set up was between Mizpeh and Shen, a rock over against Mizpeh. It is set up there where they got the deliverance and near to the place where they prayed for it. We have also the name which was put upon the monument, Ebenezer. We read of it before, chap. iv. 1. The place is called in the history, Ebenezer, by way of anticipation. In that very place they got a sore disaster before, but now a signal deliverance. Ebenezer, that is, the stone of help, including a respect to God, and bearing not only a remembrance of the victory, but that it was obtained not by them but by the Lord.

We have the reason of the name. Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. It is a grateful ackowledgment of the Lord's help for the time past, to raise their confidence in him for the time to come. He hath helped us, and shewn himself on our side; not only helped us to bear our burdens, but he hath taken them off our shoulders and wrought for us.

Doctrine—It is the duty of the Lord's people to keep the memorial of the experience which they have of the Lord's helping them. I shall discuss this point under two general heads.

I. I shall speak of the Lord's helping his people.

II. I will speak to the keeping up of the memorial of the experiences which they had of his helping them. I am then,

I. To speak of the Lord's helping his people. Here I shall answer two questions. 1. How doth the Lord help his people; and, 2. Why doth he help his people?

First, How doth the Lord help his people? Here I reply,

1. Sometimes the Lord helps his people, by working all for them, they themselves contributing nothing to their deliverance. Moses said unto the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew you to-day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Many times the children of God may be brought to that, that they can do nothing for themselves, but commit their cause to God, and depend upon him, but even then their case is not despair. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass," Psal. cxlii. 4—7. Thy Lord can do all things, said Luther to a person solicitous about a future event.

2. Sometimes the Lord assists his people in working. They endeavour their own deliverance in God's way, and he fits them to act, and blesseth their exertions crowning them with success. Like

Paul, "they labour, yet not they, but the grace of God who is with them." In this God's help is to be acknowledged, for all depends on him. "For except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." We must be at our work, and look to God for his assistance. Pray and labour.

3. Sometimes God helps his people by appointing means. Thus in the case of Hezekiah, Isaiah said, "Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover." When God intends to help his people and to make use of means and instruments for it, he can easily bring them about and raise them up. Sometimes no way appears for their help, but the Lord brings them about unexpectedly, so that "when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." If he intends to have his people brought out of Babylon, he raiseth up Cyrus for that purpose. If Elijah must be fed in his hiding place, the ravens shall be employed rather than he suffer want. And often their help comes by such unexpected means that they must say as Jacob did of his son's venison. "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, because the Lord thy God brought it unto me."

4. Sometimes without means. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. God is not bound to means, as he can work without them. A word from the Lord will bring about his people's help. He can speak peace to them, and so create it. And often when he hath tried his people's patience, by frustrating of means, he will bring about their help without them.

5. Sometimes by contrary means, as our Lord cured the blind man by laying clay upon his eyes. God does not only bring light after, but out of darkness. The troubling of the waters of Bethesda made them healing waters; and the whale that swallowed up Jonah was the ship in which he came ashore. Christ's going away filled the disciples' hearts with sorrow. "Nevertheless," said he, "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The promise guides the ship of providence, and will make a cross wind drive them to the harbour. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. For all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose."

Secondly, Let us inquire why the Lord helpeth his people.

1. Because they are in covenant with him. There is a league offensive and defensive betwixt Christ and his people. They have common friends, and common enemies. Hence all the attributes of God are engaged for them, and their help. The promise is made;

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. Thus the power of God is made the ground of Abraham's comfort by virtue of the covenant, Gen. xvii. 1, 2.

2. Because of their special relation to him. Christ is the believer's head. Hence if the foot be hurt, the head in heaven cries out, Acts ix. 4. He who is their maker, is their husband, their father, and elder brother; in a word they are one with him, one spirit. This is the ground of sympathy betwixt Christ and his people, and secures their help. "For he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye."

3. Because they look to him and trust in him for their help. The 91st psalm has in it a great many blessed promises, but see to whom they belong. "The Lord is a buckler to all those that trust in him." The Lord gives this for the reason why he would help and deliver Ebedmelech the Ethiopian; "because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord."

It lies upon the honour of God to help those who trust in him. Trust on an ingenuous man will engage him to answer the trust put in him; and God will see to those that trust in him, that they shall not be ashamed.

4. Because the Lord brings his people into straits for this very end, that he may have the glory of helping them; and they may get the greater experience of his kindness. A good friend is best known in adversity: and the Lord will let his people's case grow darker till it be near past hope, and then he will arise. "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." For the lower they are, the greater is the glory of God in delivering them. "For great is thy mercy toward me, saith David, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." And none have such rich experience of the Lord's goodness as they that are most in straits, Hos. ii. 14. We now proceed,

III. To speak of the keeping up of the memorial of the experiences which they have had of the Lord's helping them. Here three things demand our attention. *First*, What it is to keep up this memorial. *Secondly*, What of these experiences of the Lord's helping should be recorded and kept in memory. And, *Thirdly*, why should we keep up such a memorial.

First, What it is to keep up the memorial of the Lord's helping us.

1. It implies an observing of the dispensations we meet with, for our help in the course of our life. If the thing itself be not ob-

served, we cannot keep up the memorial of it. "Who is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." Many times the Lord helps, when we are sleeping and do not observe it. And this makes us like the unjust steward in recounting our mercies, setting down fifty for a hundred.

2. A discerning of the Lord's hand in the help we receive. Alas! men are ready to sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their drag: it requires wisdom to see the hand of the Lord in the good things we meet with. "For she did not know, saith the Lord, that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal."

3. Laying up these experiences and recording them, if not in a book yet in a faithful memory. "And all they that heard them, (the things said of John Baptist at his birth) laid them up in their hearts, saying, what manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him." Many instead of laying such things up, lay them down in the grave of forgetfulness, and instead of setting up a stone, lay a stone upon them, burying them out of sight. They forget that God remembered them in their low estate. "My people," says God, "have forgotten me, days without number." But if these experiences were carefully laid up, the former part of our life would help the latter, and the longer we live the richer we would grow. As in wars former success encourages to future exertions, so is it with the Christian warfare. "Thy servant," said David, "slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God." Let us,

Secondly, Inquire what of these experiences of the Lord's helping should be recorded and kept in memory.

1. We should record the timing or seasonableness of them. There is often a weight lies on this very circumstance; that the help came at such a time and not another is worthy to be remembered. Many instances of this kind occur in scripture, Gen. xxv. 45; Judges vii. 13. The church remembers the time of her deliverance, Ps. cxxvi. 1. The Lord's help comes always seasonably, though not at our time, yet at his time which is the best. This will let us see the frame of spirit in which the help did overtake us, sometimes when we were looking for it, sometimes when we were not.

2. The effects of them on our spirits. How we are affected with them when they come. "Then," says the church, "was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing." Many times the Lord helps his people in such a manner that the experience of his goodness fills them with shame, looks their doubts and fears out of

countenance, proves their unbelief to be a false prophet, and makes them resolve never to distrust God again and fills them with thankfulness. Isaiah xxxviii. 10, 12; Psal. lxxiii. 22, 23; and cxvi. 11, 12. O how useful would this be afterwards to the Christian.

3. Their harmony and agreement with the promise. If help come not by virtue of a promise, little use can be made of it this way, and for want of recording this, many of the Lord's people do often question their experiences. Experiences are the bread which the saints have to feed upon in their mournful hours; but the promise is the staff and stay of this bread without which there will be no nourishment in it. Now as face answereth to face in a glass, so God's works answer his words. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts. Thus David records his experience, saying, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word. The promises in the Bible are all written over in the experiences of the saints. "There failed not ought, said Joshua, of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."

4. Their agreement with their prayers. Gen. xxiv. 45. What are the Christian's experiences but returns of prayers. Such was that in the text. This seems to be the ground of that conclusion; "By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me." It is of great importance to notice this, for a mercy that is an answer of prayer is a double mercy; and mercies are certainly obtained by prayer, are enjoyed with thankfulness, as in the text. Only there is need of wisdom here, for sometimes God answers prayer not with the blessing itself that was desired but with as good: as instead of removing Paul's thorn in the flesh, he said to him, "my grace is sufficient for thee:" and sometimes experiences of the Lord's helping us with our expression in prayer, though not with the pressure of our own spirits, Rom. viii. 26, 27.

Lastly, Even the very place of our experiences should be recorded. The stone was set up where the victory was obtained. There are some golden spots on earth, where the Lord has entertained his people, whereof the very remembrance hath been refreshful to them afterwards. "I will remember thee," says David, "from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar;" Gen. xxviii. 11—19. And the Lord loves to have his people remember these blessed places, Gen. xxxi. 13; and xxxv. 1. Let us now,

Thirdly, Inquire why we should keep up the memorial of these things.

1. We owe this to God: In point, of obedience, when we meet

with experiences of his goodness he calls us to set up our Ebenezer: "We are to remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his month." It is very grieving to the Spirit of God to let these things slip; and God complains of his people for it, Jer. ii. 31, 32. We owe it to him in point of gratitude; acknowledgment, and the remembrance of the benefit, is the tribute we owe to God for his goodness. They called the stone Ebenezer; thereby to make acknowledgment that it was not they that got the victory, but God for them. O monstrous ingratitude to forget experiences.

We owe it to him also, in point of compliance with his design in giving experience of his help to his people. God intends his people more comfort by a mercy, than the mercy itself singly considered. He intends it as a ground to hope for more. He gives the valley of Achor for a door of hope. But how can they comply with this design unless they remember them. "Thou brakest, says Asaph, the head of the leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness." The heads of the leviathan are the princes of Pharaoh. God in that help which he gave to his people at the Red Sea, would have them not only feast themselves on it for the present, but carefully lay it up in their memories, that their faith might not want support in the wilderness.

2. We owe this to ourselves in point of interest. If we would consult our own advantage, we would not let them slip. For forformer experiences of the Lord's help are very supporting to the soul in a dark night. Sometimes a Christian's spiritual rest is broken, then it is useful to read the records of his experiences. Sometimes a little writing is found in a man's study that saves his estate and keeps him out of prison. In such times "we should remember the years of the right hand of the most high." This may revive our hopes.

These experiences are pledges of further mercies. Some promises have their day of payment here, others after this life. The performing of the former, is an earnest given to faith to look for the other. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." Every mercy a child of God receives, may be called Joseph, for the Lord shall add another to it. It is not so with others, and the two reasons shall be found in these words: "O continue thy loving-kindness to them that know thee, and thy righteousness to the upright in heart." The mercies bestowed on the Lord's people flow from solid love, and love knows not an enemy. The son abides in the house, the servant goes away at the term. The saint's mercies are made over to him by promise. It is

remarkable, 2 Sam. v. 12, that David gathers his establishment in the kingdom, by his prospering to that time. Saul too prospered at first, but was not established; the reason was, David's establishment was a special promise. The word of promise gives not only bread to the eater, but seed to the sower. These experiences then, are good arguments in prayer. We find the saints often pleading with God upon former experience. "Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death." It is not the way to plead with men, but it is a notable way to plead with God, for he is unchangeable, "whom he loves, he loves to the end."

3. We owe this to others. It is a duty to communicate our experiences of the Lord's goodness to our fellow Christians. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." But how can we do this, unless we record them, and keep up the memory of them. It must be very encouraging to distressed Christians, to hear that others have been plunged in the same or similar depths, and yet have been delivered. "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him."

Use 1. To Christians, whose work it is to look to the Lord for his help, being sensible of their own weakness. We say to you,

1. Record your experiences, keep up the memory of them. It is a soul enriching trade to gather experiences. It makes a strong Christian. It makes one ready to suffer for Christ, and to venture for him.

2. Improve your experiences for strengthening your faith and hope for time to come, in the promises of God. And to help you to this, take these notes. The same God that helped thee formerly still lives: His arm and power are as strong as ever. Doubting of the Lord's willingness to help, is a sad leak, but the ship will never sink, till faith let go its hold of the power of God.

Though awful distempers break out in the people of God in time of affliction, yet he will still perform his word to them. He will save his people notwithstanding, Psal. cxvi. 11, 12. If it were not so, we could not have been out of hell till this time. The Psalmist makes this a ground of hope to others. Psal. xxxi. 22—24. If thou be a Christian, God hath delivered thee from greater straits than any in which thou now art. "He hath delivered your soul from death." Objection, But though God deliver in one, yet he lets a man fall in another strait. Answer, Even affliction itself, a valley of Achor, may be a door of hope, a door by which a great mercy

may enter; so was Joseph's prison, and Daniel's den. A debt may be paid either with money, or something equal in value. If God do not take away the trouble, but give strength to bear it; if he remove not sickness, but remove the sick saint to heaven, he is no loser.

USE 2. A word to all. Go to God for your help in all cases. Let God be your helper. Consider,

1. You have many and strong enemies. You are not able to grapple with Satan, the world, and the flesh. These will ruin thee, if God help thee not.

2. He is a present help. He is not far off. He is within hearing of your cry. Men may perish when help is far away.

3. He is willing.

4. He is able to help thee in all cases, and at all times. When friends can do nothing but close the eyes, and prepare the funeral rites, Christ can take thy soul to his Father's glory, and present it there with exceeding joy. Amen.

Swinton, July 28, 1706, *Sermon after the Action.*

MOURNING THE ABSENCE OF CHRIST.

SERMON VII.

LAMENTATIONS iii. 49, 50.

Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down and behold from heaven.

WONDER not, that upon this occasion, we have read a mournful text to you; for I suppose if every one of us were taking liberty to express the affections and present frame of our hearts, it would be as Ezra iii. 12, 13, "when some wept with a loud voice, and many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy, from the noise of the weeping of the people." So among us, some would weep, and some rejoice; and in the meantime, others would stand as unconcerned spectators, who have not found Christ, and therefore cannot rejoice; and do not feel the want of him, and therefore cannot lament after him. Yea, perhaps, some would be found, who with one eye would look joyfully, because they have got so much; and with the other weep, because they have not got more. But alas! it is the misery of many that they are too soon

pleased. They may begin in the course of mourning with the church here, but cannot hold up with her, but stand still, long before "the Lord look down and behold from heaven," and so lose the things which they have wrought. In the text we have,

1. The church's present exercise, and that is mourning. The ground of her mourning was guilt and heavy affliction, chap. v. 16. Her grief was great, "mine eye trickleth down." Her sorrow was such as if her eye had been turned into a fountain of tears, and her head into waters. It was lasting, it ceased not: It was not for a fit and away again, and so ended; but it was without intermission, a continual sorrow.

2. The term of the continuance of this exercise. "Till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven." She would take no comfort till the Lord should give it to her. She was seeking the Lord sorrowing, and her eyes cannot dry till she find him. It was the light of his countenance only, that could restore her joy. She was resolved her cry should be continually going to the throne, till he that sits upon it, should look in mercy on her, and deliver her.

Doctrine.—As it is the duty, so it is the disposition of the godly, exercised under the hidings of the Lord's face, not to give over, nor to sit down contented, till such time as the Lord be pleased to give them a favourable look. We see it thus with Jacob. He said to God, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Gen. xxii. 26; Hosea xii. 4. And the woman of Canaan. Matt. xv. 22—28. I shall here.

I. Shew what this imports.

II. Give reasons why they are thus disposed. I am then,

I. To shew what is imported in this. It imports,

1. That a child of God may be under the hidings of God's face. When it is said. "till the Lord look," this imports that the Lord refused to look on them for the time. "Thou didst hide thy face," says David, "and I was troubled." God will have a difference betwixt the upper and lower houses. When the saints are above, all the shadows flee away, but now clouds may intercept the light of his countenance. This implies that a controversy is apprehended betwixt Christ and the soul. The soul conceives the Lord is angry, for the turning way of the face is the way how we signify our displeasure. When the Lord turns his back, conscience turns its face to the soul, and tells that the Lord is displeased. And O! how bitter must God's anger be to that soul that knows him. Is his favour sweet as life, then his anger must be bitter as death. It implies also an apprehension of the Lord's laying aside any special concern about them. I do not say but it is a mistaken ap-

prehension, but sure such a thing is here implied; for the wife will be ready to think that her husband has forgot her, when he locks up himself in his chamber, and does not give her a look through door or window. This was David's exercise when he said, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" This was Zion's conclusion, though she was mistaken, Isa. xlix. 14, 15. The children of God may be under that apprehension, that their high priest hath let them out of his mind, though he remembers them still, and doth them many good offices. which they know not, till afterwards. But it is so long between visits, that they think he hath forgotten them.

2. It imports that the hidings of the Lord's face, may continue long with a child of God. The tears for his absence, may trickle down long, ere he come and wipe them away. "I am afflicted," says Heman, "and ready to die from my youth up." Sovereignty hath the disposal of the time, and sometimes may prolong it, so as it may appear a kind of eternity. Hence such complaints as, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." God will have his people's faith and patience tried, and therefore makes their clouds return after the rain.

3. A holy dissatisfaction with all things, while Christ hides his face. The soul is difficult to please when the Lord is gone. Nothing will stop the fountain of tears here, till the Lord look down from heaven. The word will not please them, and ordinances will not please them, without him, Psal. vi. 6, 7, and xxvii. 4. An angel's presence could not satisfy Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 15; nor dry Mary's cheeks, while her Lord was taken away. Their life is bound up in his favourable looks, and as Rachel weeping for her children, refuses to be comforted, because they are not, so they cannot be comforted till he return:

4. A wearisome longing after the Lord, Job vii. 2, 3; and xxiii. 3, 4. The soul is looking for his appearance, as the traveller in the night longs for the day-breaking. Most of the causes of weariness concur here, as solitude. The wife lives but a solitary life, when the husband is from home, though the house be thronged with servants; so does the child of God, while the Lord hides his face. Darkness also causeth weariness. It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun; but now the Sun of Righteousness hides his face, and it is a dark hour with the soul, Job xxix. 2, 3. Here also there is some toil. A time of desertion, is a toilsome time to the people of God. "I am weary with my groaning," says David. Duties are hard work, when Christ withdraws. Labour in vain much more causeth weariness. Hope deferred makes the heart sick. Sometimes they

no sooner call but God hears, then they need not weary. O but to be standing alone, in the dark hour of the night, trying to break up heaven's gates, to get corruptions mortified, and temptations overcome, and all without felt success, how wearisome must that be? A man's not seeing the end of his work, makes weary work. It refresheth the labourer, to think that when the sun goes down, he will go to his rest; but the people of God, in this case, see not their signs, nor know the time how long. They know not what hour of the night it is, and how long it will be till day-break. Finally, continued disappointments from every quarter, from which the soul expects ease, makes wearines in full measure. Job. xxiii. 8, 9; Jer. viii. 15.

5. Some hope that the Lord will yet look down, and behold from heaven, Psal. xliii. 5. Should they lose all hope, they lose all. It is true their hope may be very low: yet likely they will be able to say, who knows but he may return and leave a blessing behind. Sometimes they may draw hasty and heavy conclusions against themselves, but hope will yet set up its head, and make them say with Jonah, "yet I will look again towards God's holy temple;" though it may be sometimes sunk, but all is not lost that is in hazard, Lam. iii. 18—21. Hope feeds those weary labourers, and God never allows his people to sink so low, but everlasting arms are still beneath them, to keep them from falling to the bottom.

Lastly, A resolute persisting in duty till the Lord return: The soul resolves never to give over, and so holds on, till the Lord look down and behold from heaven. Sense may often bring bad news, and tell them they have already got the last look of him, but the soul is resolute, and will not give over. If it must die, it resolves to die in the bed of honour, even at the Lord's footstool, and to dig its grave at his door. We now proceed,

II. To give some reasons why they are thus disposed. I shall offer only these few.

1. Felt need of Christ engageth them to this course. You know what determined the lepers that sat at the gate of Samaria. Many see a want of Christ, that feel not their need of him; hence a few cold wishes, and if that will do, well and good; but if not, they must even live without him. But the gracious soul cannot live without him. They say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. Now, necessity hath no law, and hunger will dig through stone walls. And if it cannot dig through them, it will leap over them. The soul still cries, Lord help me.

2. Superlative love to him, engageth them to this, Song viii. 6, 7. Love can endure any thing but absence, or the loss of the beloved party. Christ hath appeared in his beauty to the gracious soul, and hath captivated his heart, and it is so fixed with the sight of his transcendent excellency and fulness, that he cannot take it back again. The eyes of the soul are opened, and can see no happiness in any other. But in the meantime, the soul cannot cease to desire to be happy, and therefore can never rest, till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.

Use 1. Hence we may see why so many professors fall short of Christ. They are utter strangers to this disposition of the godly. There are many who have not so much sense as to complain of the Lord's distance from them, because their consciences were never so much touched with any notable common work of the Spirit of God on them. There are others, whose character may be that, "ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth," they have some movings upon their souls, and they complain; but their complaints are dead, heavy, and inactive. They may at a communion or so, have something like mourning after the Lord, but all their exercise is like a slight shower, that wets only the surface of the earth, which a little wind presently dries up, ere it can do any good. The concern of their souls for Christ does not last till, but is gone, ere the Lord look down, and behold from heaven. Reasons of this are,

1. They have not the living spirit of Christ in them, and so they cannot follow the Lord fully. Numb. xiv. 24; John iv. 14. It is but awakening, and not changing grace they have; therefore it decays by little and little, as the light after sunset, till it grow to perfect darkness. Their reigning sloth being only covered, not subdued, rises again, and overspreads the soul, as weeds do in the spring. Take a branch and ingraft it, it will keep green a while; but if it do not take with the stock, and unite with it, it withers. "If a man," says Jesus, "abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered."

2. There are difficulties in the way to heaven, which their hearts cannot digest. Few see heaven; and why? ease is sweet, and the gate is strait. They love gold, but they cannot exert themselves to dig for it. "The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour." They see heaven afar off, and would fain be there. But there is a great gulph between them and it, that they dare not venture to swim. Heaven will not drop down into their mouths, hence finding the fruitlessness of their attempts, they despair of mending their case, and then sit down to contrive ways to smooth their consciences.

3. The world and their lusts were never made sapless to them, but still have the chief room in their hearts. Hence, when Christ will not answer, they have another door to go to. They are unlike those who said to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." They find rest is sweet, so sit down, and fall short of Christ. They are like a wife called to go forth and meet her husband; but her children, in whom she delights, cry after her, and hold her still. And thus many part with Christ, as Orpah with Naomi.

USE 2. You are in earnest for Christ, yet under the hidings of his face, and all things else insipid to you without him, you see here how you are to behave; you must hold on seeking till the Lord look down from heaven. Take up with no comfort in the world, till you get it from himself, and from his blood; and be resolute that you will never give over till he look down from heaven, and be sure you shall get a healing look from the Lord. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" Have you missed him, have you come short of what God promiseth to his people; of what is necessary to your case; of what you desired of him? then go from this place, resolved to hang about his hand, and to cry for it till you obtain it; protesting that nothing shall satify you, till the Lord look down and behold from heaven; and be sure you shall get your communion yet, though the table be drawn, and no more bread and wine on it.

OBJECTION 1. I dare seek him no more, guilt so stares me in the face, that prayer is a terror to me. ANSWER, This is a fit of indisposition you are under, and sometimes Christians are carried away with it. But if you belong to Christ, you will even take up with prayer again, seeing yourself the greater fool, that ever you laid it aside, if it were ever so short a while. But O hear what Christ himself says to you. Song ii. 14.

OBJECTION 2. But I am burdened with a hard heart, I cannot mourn after the Lord; could I seek him to purpose, I would have hope that he would look down, and behold from heaven. I fear he has nothing to do with me. I see I am all wrong, but I can do nothing to help it. ANSWER I suppose you may find three hopeful things, even in that case. 1. Self-dissatisfaction. There is a secret discontent with yourselves in you. Weak grace is frowning on corruption, though it is not able to master it. 2. Self-condemnation. The man is the vilest creature in his own eyes. He has nothing to commend him to Christ, and he would wonder if he would cast him a crumb; saying, "it is of the Lord's mercies, that I am not consumed, and because his compassions fail not. But to this man, saith the

Lord, will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a broken and a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." 3. There is a spark of kindness to Christ in the heart, though the soul has written the bill of divorce, and put it in Christ's hand, yet the soul would not sign it for thousands of worlds. Well then, if you cannot mourn, will you sigh and groan after him. Rom. viii. 26, 27. If you cannot sigh, will you give him an earnest look. "I am cast out of thy sight," said Jonah, "yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

Objection 3. The Lord has let me fall into such a gross sin as has wounded my conscience, and I fear he has shaken me off, by letting me fall into it. And whenever that comes in my mind, I cannot think that the Lord will ever look more to me. Answer. Have you fled to Christ for refuge. If you have, then your greatest sins may hide God's face, but shall never part God and you. Psal. lxxxix. 30—34, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." The Lord has designs of good, even in permitting his people to fall. He raises profit to them out of it. Thus God left Hezekiah, in the business of the Babylonian ambassadors, "to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." It also brings a revenue of glory to himself, by his having mercy upon them. And for your continual disquiet, look that you have not trusted more to your repentance for your sin, than to the blood of Christ, which "alone can purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

Objection. 4. I have met with so many disappointments, that I can scarcely think but I must give it over. Answer. You are not the first that have met with them. Job xxiii. Song iii. Disappointments are needful for us in several respects. But if you should meet with one on the back of another, till your dying hour, if Christ come at last, you have no reason to repent your waiting on; and come he will, to them that will not want him. There are three signs when your disappointments may be near an end. 1. When your heart is duly humbled, and you are as a weaned child; when you leave off limiting God; resolving to wait on God, but to prescribe no time to him. "Lord thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." 2. When you get your case touched, and laid open in the public ordinances. "The watchmen that go about the city, found me," says the spouse, "and after this she soon found her beloved." 3. When you are carried above means, to look over them all to Christ himself; even passing on from the watchmen, till you find him whom your soul loveth.

Lastly, My case grows worse and worse, heavier and heavier, and always the longer the more hopeless. Answer. Wait on till the

Lord look down. There is hope in Israel, concerning this thing. Men's extremity is God's opportunity, Isa. xli. 17, 18. "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." Christ usually times his visits, so that he may be the more welcome when he comes. It is as with Hagar, who never saw the well, till she gave over the child for death. The darkest hour is readily before day-break. Amen.

Ettrick, January 3, 1725.

THE SHORTNESS OF HUMAN LIFE.

SERMON VIII.

JOB xvi. 22.

When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.

TIME is in constant motion. Years are like rivers flowing fast away, and still running a straight, but no hope of their running a backward course. The year now gone will never return, and that now come will run on, till it also run out. Meanwhile, our life here is also running to an end.

Our text mentions an important removal, that is abiding all. This is, "we shall go the way whence we shall not return." Death is the going to that place, that state. A removing from time to eternity, from the world of sense, to the world of spirits. There will be a return of the body from the grave, but no return from eternity.

We have also the longest term fixed for this removal. It may be within a few months, weeks, days, hours, that we shall be called away. But without all peradventure, the term of removing will be to all of us within a few years. "When a few years are come," by that time we will be gone.

DOCTRINE. The coming in of a few new years, will set us out of this world, never to return to it. However vain men make new years, new occasions of renewing their follies, superstitions, carnal mirth, and jollities. They thus act as those in whom madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

I see not how serious persons can fail to have this serious thought on such an occasion. Here I shall very shortly,

I. Shew in what respects, we can have but a few years to come.

II. Why is the coming, and not the going of these few years mentioned.

III. When the few years have sent us off, there is no returning. We are then,

I. To shew in what respects, we can have but a few years to come.

1. In comparison of the many years to which man's life did sometimes extend; namely, in the ages before the flood, Gen. v. When man's life was of that great extent, an ill use was made of it; and Enoch, the best man of that period, had the shortest life, namely, three hundred and sixty-five years. Now our years are dwindled into so small a number, that the odd number even of Enoch's years, is a long life with us, which few comparatively, reach.

2. In comparison of the years of the world that are past, now about five thousand, seven hundred and twenty-four. If we consider what of the world's time was run before we knew it, how late incomers we are, and how soon we must be gone, we must needs say, we have but, at most, few years to come. Our life is but a short visit made to the world of sense.

3. In comparison of the great work which we have to do, namely, our salvation, and generation work. If we were to live hundreds of years, we have as much work laid to our hands, as might fill it all up; and we would be convinced of that, if once we would rightly consider, that we have both our own souls to attend to, and to be useful for God in the world.

4. In comparison of eternity. If our life was lengthened out to a hundred times the length of the ordinary period of it, it would be no more in that case, than a drop of water to the ocean, or a grain of sand to a mountain. How few then must our years be, which we probably have to come. But let us inquire,

II. Why is the coming, and not the going of the few years mentioned.

1. Because, that by the time they are fully come in, they are gone out; so that the coming and the going of a year, are all one upon the matter. It is not one or two, or a month, or eleven months of days, that make a year; till the last day and hour of a year is come, and then it is gone by that time. How quick is our time, then, in its motion; how soon do our years pass, which no sooner are come, than they are gone again.

2. Because that year will at length begin to come in, which we will never see the going out of. Every year is that to some, and to which of us, this year may be it, who knows. But in the ordinary course of providence, it cannot fail to be so, to some or other of us, in the place. The term of the year should certainly suggest this serious thought to us. We are now,

III. To shew that when the few years have sent us off, there is no returning.

1. Men cannot come back, Job. xvi. 14. If men cannot keep themselves alive, far less can they restore themselves to life, and return after death hath carried them away. Nothing less than an omnipotent hand can loose the bands of death, make up the ashes into a body again, and re-unite the soul to it. And,

2. God will not bring them back again. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." God has appointed this life for the time of a trial, when it is ended, the sentence is passed, and no place remains for a new time of trial. With respect to the godly after death, their souls are at rest with God, in heaven; their bodies rest in the grave, sleeping in Jesus. He will not pluck them out of their rest. As for the wicked, they have had their time, and it is out, the sentence is passed, and there is no reversing of it. For improvement,

Let the going out and coming in of years be so noticed and improved by you, as that you may apply your hearts to wisdom on that occasion. I cannot think that the observing of such a time in the way of carnal mirth, feasting, and giving of gifts and handsells, is becoming Christianity. It is certain that was the manner of the heathens; and it is as certain, that God strictly forbade his people to symbolize with the heathen, and follow their customs. "You shall not," said he to them, "walk in the manner of the nations, which I cast out before you; for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them." But it appears very proper in such a time,

1. That men seriously weigh with themselves that they are now a great step nearer another world than they were. A year is a very considerable part of one's life, for there are not many of them in our whole life. And if you be in case for passing into another world, you may lift up your heads with joy, "for now is your salvation nearer, than when you believed." But, hearer, if you be not, you should be stirred up the more to make ready.

2. That they take a humbling back-look of their way, and consider, the many wrong steps which they have made in their past years, and particularly in the year last passed. The way of provi-

dence towards them in it; what mercies, what rods, what deliverances they have met with, and what improvement has been made of them. Taking up resolutions, in the strength of grace to walk more closely with God in all time coming.

3. That they renew their acceptance of the covenant, and lay down measures for their safety in another world, what time soever their few years shall come to an end. That is, that in prospect of their going out of the world at the time appointed by God, they do what they would do, if it were told they should never see the end of the year. Ezek. xlv. 18—21. And it would be proper to take a particular time for this, shorter or longer, for the more solemn managing of the work. None should bind themselves to any time to which God hath not bound them; but it were good to take the time most convenient for the work.

1. Consider how many years have gone over our heads, and how short way our business for eternity is come, nay, with many of us it is not yet begun. They who have a long journey before them, and have loitered in the morning, had much need to mend their pace, when the day is far spent. For every seven years any of us have lived, we have had a whole year of sabbaths. And at this rate, several years of Sabbaths have passed with most of us. But how unprepared are we as yet, for the eternal sabbath in the heavens.

2. How quickly do years run out, and make no stay. They pass like a tale that is told. And if we have more years yet to come, these that are to come, will post away with no less speed than those that are now gone, and will never return.

3. We know what is past, but what may be to come, we know not. The lower end of our sand glass of time is within our view, and we see what is run out. But the upper end is covered to us; we know not how much, or how little remains to run.

4. Our years once gone, there is no bringing them back again. If our work has been neglected in them, it must lie for ever undone for them; and we must either do and make up the former neglect, by improving the present opportunity, or we are for ever ruined.

Lastly, Eternity is a business of the greatest weight. It is that in which we, and the world itself too, will together be swallowed up. The great glass of time for the world's duration, was set up in the beginning, Gen. i. It is not to be turned for this world, but when it runs out, the world ends: and we may be sure it is towards the end by this time. Now the happiness of the other world is too great for us to be indifferent about it, and to be cheated out of it by Satan and our vain hearts. The misery of the other world is too great a burden to be easy about, while we are not secured

against it. The punishment of loss, and the punishment of sense, are things which require our utmost care and concern to escape. The eternity and unchangeableness of these things, add immensely to their weight. There is no change there for ever. But once happy, happy for evermore; and once miserable, miserable for evermore. Finally, when it will come upon us, we know not. Our few years being come, then we go, and shall know in our experience what that is, about which we have so often heard so much. Amen.

A Sermon preached at the Ordination of Mr. ROBERT LITHGOW, *at Askirk, March* 7, 1711.

A HEART EXERCISED UNTO GODLINESS, NECESSARY TO MAKE A GOOD MINISTER.

SERMON IX.

1 TIMOTHY iv. 7,

And exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

Two things are necessary to make a good minister of Jesus Christ; namely, sound doctrine, and a holy godly life. A good minister is one nourished up in, or with the words of faith, verse 6. He does not only hold forth the breasts of the word to others, but sucks them himself, and grows by them. The apostle will have Timothy to study a holy accuracy in both these; so to hold by the words of faith grounded on divine testimony, as to refuse all profane and old wives' fables: that is all impertinent discourses that have no foundation in the word of God, and have no tendency to the promoting either of faith or holiness. These he doth in contempt call old wives' fables, which, whether true or false, are yet unprofitable and profane; or impure and muddy, unworthy of the heavens and stars, according to the notion of the word; and therefore, as a Greek, not to be brought to the temple. In the text he calls him to the diligent study of true godliness, in which,

1. Consider the connection. And, or but exercise thyself rather unto godliness. The refusing of the one, and embracing of the other, must go together. There is an opposition betwixt the two. Such impertinences may nourish men's lusts, but cannot feed their souls in godliness. There is no suitableness in them for that end,

more than in ashes to feed our bodies. They have no word of divine appointment for that end, which though they were suitable, yet would be absolutely necessary for their efficacy; and therefore men's souls will lose by them instead of gaining. But there is a pleasant harmony betwixt the words of faith and true godliness. The words of faith are the doctrine according to godliness. There is a suitableness between them. And the words of faith have a word of divine appointment, making them the means of holiness. John xvii. 17; Rom. x. 17. Holiness again casts a divine splendour about the truths of God, to discover them in their glory. "For if a man," said our Saviour, "will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Hence the Christian's practice is, walk in the truth; and his faith of the principles of religion, is speaking the truth in love, Eph. iv. 15; which shews us, that were truth more received in the world, there would be fewer of profane lives: and were there more holy hearts exercised unto godliness, there would not be so many unsound heads.

2. The exhortation itself, which is not to be taken comparatively, as if of two good things here, exercising unto godliness were the best, but simply and absolutely. The ministers of Christ, that would be good ministers of Jesus Christ, are simply to refuse these profane and old wives' fables, and in opposition to them, to exercise themselves to godliness; to bend their studies towards the advancing of godliness in themselves, and in the people. Godliness here, comprehends the whole of religion. It is a conformity to God in the whole man. To this end we must exercise ourselves. The word properly signifies such exercise as wrestlers and runners use, to which the apostle frequently alludes; which was with all their might and skill, that they might gain the victory, being trained up to it by frequent practice. It is plain from the following verse, that the apostle opposeth the exercise unto godliness, unto bodily exercise, which denotes external exercises in religion, by which the body is exercised, but not the spirit, to its advancing in holiness; which, therefore, are not religion indeed, or godliness. Such as abstaining from certain meats, marriage, and such like things, verse 3. Man is not a mere machine, a lump of earth, and therefore godliness cannot consist in bodly exercise. He hath a soul which is his better part. It is a spirit, as God is a spirit, and religion exists there. The exercise unto godliness then, is heart exercise, soul exercise; labouring and wrestling to get the soul wrought up into a conformity to God, in holiness, which may sometimes be alone, (without bodily exercise,) acceptable unto God. But bodily exercise can never be acceptable

without it, seeing it derives all its value from the soul exercise, which spiritualizeth it. The apostle does not simply condemn bodily exercise. Men may fast, abstain from marriage, and do such things as may best contribute to the prosperity of the soul. They may, and must exercise their tongues, in praying, preaching, and the like; but in all these things they must be spiritual, exercising their hearts unto godliness, which lies inwardly.

DOCTRINE.—A heart exercised unto godliness, as it is necessary unto all; so it is especially necessary to him, that would be a good minister of Jesus Christ. In discoursing upon this, I shall,

I. Shew what this heart exercise unto godliness is.

II. The necessity of the exercise of the heart to godliness, to make a good minister of Jesus Christ.

I. I am to shew what this heart exercise unto godliness is.

1. It pre-supposeth a man to be truly godly. That professor or minister that is not godly can never exercise himself to godliness. It is impossible to act without a principle of acting, and exercise doth naturally require a power of it. He can never exercise himself to running, that wants feet to run with; or to wrestling, who wants arms; nor the ungodly exercise themselves to godliness; on the contrary, "an heart they have exercised with covetous practices." There is more haste than good speed, when men run to be leaders of the Lord's people, ere ever they have been taught to follow Christ among them. Serious men will not dare adventure on that great work, till they have examined themselves in the point of personal holiness, and had some comfortable account of themselves therein. Our very calling, supposeth us to be holy, Deut. xxxiii. 8. A slave to Satan and lusts, cannot be very meet to be a man of God, nor does it suit well to preach the words of life, with the grave cloths of an unregenerate state upon us. Where it is so, it is sad. For the minister himself, that is an awful hedge about the mountain; "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hast instruction, and castest my words behind thee." It is a dreadful work to be ferrying over others, with our own backs to Immanuel's land. The conversion of every graceless man is a wonder, but the conversion of a graceless minister is a double wonder; therefore, when the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, it is added, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. There is here particular notice taken of the conversion of priests. The more frequently holy things go through men's hands, and do not make them better,

they harden them the more. It is sad also for the people. They that begin not at home, in their own breasts, to ruin the devil's kingdom, will not readily set themselves to do much execution against it abroad. And if the Lord begin a good work in a soul it is hard for people in the pangs of the new birth, to fall into the hands of those who have had no experience of these things in their own souls.

2. Making religion our business. In this the apostle gave himself a pattern to us. "Herein," says he, "do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward men." Godliness should be our great work, how to advance it in ourselves and others. Now we will make religion our business, if we take it not only by fits and starts, but make it our daily work, as men exercise themselves in their callings. That is a sad character of whom Job saith, "will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" But see our duty as angels of the churches, Rev. iv. 8. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come." The priests and Levites, in their attendance in the temple, "were to lift up their hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord." Godliness is that holy fire, which we are to watch, that it go not out at any time, in ourselves or others. For ministers or people to make religion only their sabbath-day's work is but Pharaoh's religion, to serve God when we have nothing else to do. If the heart be allowed to rove, and lie carnal all the week, no wonder that it be ill to gather for a sabbath; and that the affections be ill to kindle, that lie drenched all the week in carnal worldly things. Again, we make religion our business, if whatever our exercise be, we make godliness still the scope of it. "For me to live," says Paul, "is Christ, and to die is gain." This then, should be the scope, that all the several lines of our life and actions, may meet there as in the centre. We have many things to do as Christians, and much as ministers; but happy they, that make this the scope of all, in public and private. The most holy minister on earth, while he is feeding others with the one hand, hath need to be putting into his own mouth with the other; and it would likely do others the more good, that we had the relish of it on our souls. How sweet might our work of preaching, catechising, reading, and studying, be to us, when thus followed; not studying and preaching just for preaching's sake, but for godliness's sake: that is, in effect, for God's sake. And if in reading and meditation, we be obliged to go even without the compass of the holy ground, yet to manage it so, as to bring and consecrate the spoil to the service of the tabernacle.

3. It imports a vigorous following of it, as wrestlers and runners ply their work vigorously. The apostle will have those that serve the Lord "to be fervent in spirit;" seething hot, as the word imports; Rom. xii. 11. The word of the Lord, in Jeremiah's breast, was as a burning fire shut up in his bones. When it is thus as a fire in the heart, it will not readily die in our mouths. Though burning lips with a dead heart, is but bodily exercise that will not profit; and though it may gain credit with men, God will account of it no more than as a potsherd covered over with silver dross. It was John the Baptist's commendation "that he was a burning and a shining light." Much need have we to be lively, for our own sake, and the sake of others.

4. A resoluteness, over the belly of all opposition. "Thou, therefore," says Paul to Timothy, "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ;" we must thus act, as those who strive for the mastery. Levi will always finds himself the son of the hated, if he set himself to answer his name, and set himself to join his own heart, and the heart of others to the Lord. Satan will oppose the exercise of godliness in all, but especially in ministers; because a lively minister is most likely to make a lively people, and a dead minister can scarcely fail to make a dead people. To be a little more particular, I will touch at four things.

1. We should exercise ourselves to the knowledge of these things pertaining to godliness, that we may be full of eyes, and "by reason of use, have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Therefore, "we must meditate upon these things, and give our hearts wholly to them, that our profiting may appear to all." Solomon lay down ignorant, and arose wise as an angel of God. Bezaleel and Aholiab got the art of making all manner of work and utensils for the tabernacle, in an extraordinary way from the Lord, but others behoved to learn it, and be taught by them. We must be at pains to get knowledge, and therefore give attendance to reading. We will find many books useful, but there are four, the study of which are necessary to make a good minister of Jesus Christ. These are, 1. Jesus Christ himself, who is that body of divinity which the Holy Ghost teacheth all his scholars, particularly those whom he fits for the work of the ministry. "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." There is no saving knowledge of God, but in him. All is in him, not only subjectively, but objectively, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And

in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Ah! how foolish are they that turn over many volumes, while this lieth by neglected. "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them; because he knoweth not how to go to the city." This the apostle resolved to make his study. "For I determined," says he, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Shame and blushing may cover our faces when we think on this.

The second book is that of our own hearts, ourselves. The beasts, Rev. iv. 8, were full of eyes within. It is sad when the heart is a sealed book. Three things, said Luther, make a good minister, temptation, prayer, and meditation. Temptation makes the man know his own heart, if he be attentive to observe it: for it makes characters both of grace and corruption appear. It is likely to be the best sermon that is taken out of this book, among the rest.

The third book is God's word, the Bible. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." If we would be good Christians, or good ministers, we must study this, not simply as a book of knowledge, that we may speak of the truths contained in it; but as a book of saving knowledge, that we may feel the power of the truths of it on our hearts, and may, as the original hath it, Rom. vi. 17, be delivered into that form of doctrine, as melted metal cast into a mould, comes out with the form thereof upon it.

The works of God make the fourth book. Providence is a river continually bringing down golden ore, in gathering of which much of the exercise of godliness consists. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." And it should be the exercise of ministers in particular, who are to be full of eyes before, to observe the motions of their great Master in his works as well as otherwise. The watchman that is not asleep, is supposed to see the sword coming.

2. We should be exercised in combating the lusts of our hearts, beginning the war against the devil at home. Like Paul, "we should keep our bodies under, and bring them into subjection; lest that by any means, when we have preached to others, we ourselves should be castaways." How sad will it be, if we be keepers of the vineyards of others, yet keep not our own, but let it be as the garden of the sluggard! We never want matter for this exercise; if we be secure, at any time, it is not because our foes are expelled from the house, but because we see them not, or have lost heart for the struggle.

3. We should be exercised to the performing of our duties, and that in a spiritual manner. Many are the duties of Christianity and of the ministry, and we should have that mark of sincerity, "that we have respect unto all God's commandments." We need eat no idle bread. And we must exercise ourselves to be spiritual in them all, acting from a right principle, in a right manner, for a right end. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find so doing." If these things be wanting, what we do will be but loathsome bodily exercise. What avails it though we speak with the tongue of angels, without a principle of love to God, and the good of souls. Though we should waste our lungs and whole bodies, it is of no avail, if meanwhile the base heart be swelling with pride. If our work be a sacrifice to self, the fatter the more abominable to God.

4. We should be exercised in the life of faith, without which, in vain will we attempt the other parts of the exercise of godliness. "We must live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us." I take this to be the soul's constant travelling betwixt the fulness in Christ, and the emptiness, nothingness, misery and poverty in itself. This we may take up in these two things. 1. A continual use-making of the blood of Christ, to take away our guilt, and new defilement, which we contract in every thing. The laver stood beside the altar, in which they were to wash their hands and their feet before they approached the altar, though in the morning they had bathed themselves. "Even he that is washed, still needs to wash his hands and his feet." 2. A continual use-making of the Spirit of Christ, for sanctification. The coals with which the priests were to burn incense in the temple, were to be taken from the altar of burnt-offering. And without the Spirit of Christ, we and our duties will be but a dead lump. There is a fulness of merit and spirit in him. Happy they who are exercised by faith to bring it in as a flood into their guilty and barren souls. We now proceed,

II. To shew the necessity of the exercise of the heart unto godliness, to make a good minister.

1. It is necessary to make a man faithful in his work, and to cause him take God for his party, with whom he hath to do. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." If the fear of the Lord be not on our spirits, to counterbalance the fear of men, we cannot avoid being ensnared in unfaithfulness. But a heart exercised to godliness, will lead us on to act, as in the sight of God, whether in public or in private, that no souls perish through our default. Hence a man will not offer what cost him nothing;

because, let the people be ever so few or injudicious, he is to offer it to the Lord. He will not keep up any thing of the mind of God that may be profitable to souls, for God is his party.

2. It is necessary to give a man a sense of the weight of the work, and the worth of souls, without which he cannot be a good minister. 2 Cor. v. 9, 10. It is a weighty work. "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, the savour of life unto life: and who is sufficient for these things?" But it will sit light on men that are not exercised to godliness, for how can we have a sense of the worth of the souls of others, if we keep not up the sense of the worth of our own souls?

3. It is very necessary to fit a man to suffer for truth. The Lord sometimes calls ministers to seal the truths which they have preached, with their blood. Such days have been, and yet may be. And a good minister must say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." But alas! how will we be able for this, if we feel not the power of truth on our own souls. The exercise of godliness has carried out some to suffer for Christ, when they could speak little for him; while many learned heads but ungodly hearts, have betrayed him.

4. It is necessary to give a man insight into the mind of God. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant." Heavenly truths appear certainly in another lustre to the exercised soul than to others. And the interruption of this exercise, will make the great things of God's law appear even as a strange thing to them, who before have tasted the sweetness of them. When the heart is sealed, the Bible will be found sealed too. If they be not sensible of it in the time, they will be sensible of it after the vail is taken away. An exercised heart is one of the best commentaries on the Bible, when the soul, upon the reading of it, can say, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God."

5. To make a man one that has interest in the court of heaven. I intend not to put the exercise of godliness in the room of Christ's intercession. But sure it is, that the prayers of those who are favourites of heaven, have much influence. It is of importance to think how the prophet, to convince the priests that God was displeased with them, puts them to try their interest in the court of heaven, Mal. i. 9, "And I pray you beseech God, that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the Lord of Hosts."

Lastly, It is most necessary to fit us for the performance of the several duties of our calling, whether in preaching, administering the sacraments, visiting families, or the sick. Our great business is to bring souls to Christ, and to preach his unsearchable riches; and the law itself must be preached still, in view to Christ, as the only way to union with God, and communion with him, and as the alone fountain of true holiness; and not to feed people with barren discourses of Christless morality. This is a great work: the apostle calls for prayers for his help in it, Col. iv. 3, 4. Much need of personal acquaintance with him, for that end. For God to reveal his Son in us, that we may preach him among the people. Alas! What hopes can we have, that the word should have weight with others, if it have none with ourselves. That is a stinging word, "But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." If they did not turn, but would go to hell, they should go with a witness. To speak powerfully in the demonstration of the Spirit, this is necessary. The heart makes the best oratory. If lusts live at peace in our own bosoms, then preaching against them in others, we will hear a voice from within to cool our zeal, saying, as David, "deal gently with the young man for my sake." But if a man be exercised in combating his own lusts, it will put an edge on his own zeal, when he comes to his own weak side. It is exercise unto godliness that makes a man speak seasonably, and to the cases of the people; and he that is most exercised about his own heart, bids fairest for opening up the hearts of others; for as face answereth to face in water, so doth the heart of one Christian to that of another. And for this very cause, are matters of exercise laid in to ministers. "God," says Paul, "comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

Let us then, my brethren, study the exercise of godliness. Let this be our great work, if we would either save our own souls, or the souls of others. This will be our only comfort in a dying hour, "that in simplicity and in godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, holding forth the word of life;" and this will be our comfort, when we must leave our pulpits to others, and go to the tribunal of our Master. The crown of glory will be sure to such wrestlers. But

doubly miserable will we be, if while we preach to others, we ourselves be castaways.

To you, the people, I would say: 1. Embrace godliness, and be exercised unto it. It belongs to you as well as to us. You have no dispensation to be vile more than we. Ungodliness will ruin you eternally; "for without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Study to be a lively people. A dead people will do much to make a dead minister. Many a time the minister comes out to the people, in bands laid on for their sake.

2. Take kindly whatsoever is said or done by us for the advancing of godliness. It is your good the Lord's servants will seek. And true wisdom would learn you to love him best, that crosseth your corruptions most, whether in doctrine or discipline.

We are dying ministers, preaching to dying people. Other persons will shortly get our pulpits, and your seats. Let this be our joint exercise while we live, and then we will not be afraid to die.

In vain will we press men to bring forth fruit to God, while they are not married to Christ, and there is no marriage with Christ, without dying to the law. Rom. vii. 4. Dare any look God in the face with their best works, but through the vail of the flesh of Christ? Will we press men to conformity to God, and not send them for it to Jesus, "who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," whom he sent down from heaven, that men beholding him by faith, "might be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." An eternal barrenness will be on our souls, if influences of grace for duty, come not from heaven; and the falling dew shall sooner make its way through the flinty rock, than influences of grace come from God to us, but through him whom the Father hath constituted the head of influences. "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." There can be no good fruit but what grows on this vine, John xv. 1—6. Let men otherwise exercise themselves to the greatest strictness and mortification, it will be found at length, not exercise to godliness, but to ungodliness; "seeing he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who sent him." Amen.

Yarrow, March 18, 1711.

A HEART EXERCISED UNTO GODLINESS NECESSARY TO MAKE A GOOD CHRISTIAN.

SERMON X.

1 TIMOTHY iv. 7,

Exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

EXERCISE unto godliness is now almost worn out of the world. Many casting off the very bodily exercise in religion; few, very few, keeping up the heart exercise of it; and it is our work to strive against the stream. This is all the apology I shall make to you, for preaching upon a text that several of you heard me upon, elsewhere, not long ago. There it was my business, to stir up myself, and my brethren in the ministry, to the exercise of godliness, in order to make us good ministers; and now I am to stir you up to it, in order to make you good Christians.

The apostle gives us here a short, but substantial description of the Christian life. It is an exercise, it is not a name. People must not think to take on a profession of religion, as men set their foot in a boat, and sit there at their own ease, till they be set ashore. Persons may reach hell in this way, but they will not arrive at heaven. For time runs with a rapid course, and sleep we, or wake we, carries us swiftly down the stream to eternity.

Again, Christianity is not an easy exercise, but such as wrestlers or runners used, exerting all their might and skill to gain the victory. We are not to expect two summers in one year, or rest here, and in heaven also. We are also reminded, that Christianity is heart-soul-exercise, for it is opposed to bodily exercise. It is not the saying of a prayer, reading a chapter, hearing a sermon, giving every one their due, and the like. Though the tongue cry to God, as if it would rend the clouds, and the eyes should help it forward with a flood of tears, the hands should deal among the poor all that a man hath, and his mouth should keep shut to macerate his body with fasting, the knees should become hard as horns with praying, and after all this, the feet should carry away the skeleton to be burned for religion: yet if there be no more, and that of another kind, it is all but vile bodily exercise, that will leave the soul ruined and undone at the latter end. "For," says Paul, "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body

to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." As if he had said, if my soul within me, burn not as clear in sincere love to God, as my body in the flame, I will but go out of one fire here, into another in hell. So then true religion is an inward thing.

Once more, the Christian life is a heart exercise to the most noble end, even to godliness. It is not to get a name; nay, it is not to get just as much grace as may keep people out of hell, which is the utmost bounds of the ambition of some; and by this they declare that godliness hath never yet touched them at the heart. But it is godliness, a conformity to God in the whole man. This is the scope of their exercise; this only will satisfy the holy ambition, with which the Spirit of the Lord hath fired their hearts.

Doctrine. The true Christian life is heart exercise to godliness. For illustrating this, I shall,

I. Shew some weighty truths imported in this.

II. Some things in which the exercise to godliness consists. I am then,

I. To shew some weighty truths imported in this.

1. Habitual godliness is absolutely necessary to salvation. For as a man cannot wrestle, that wants the power of his arms; so neither can a man lead the Christian life, who is not a Christian indeed. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." There must be a new nature, ere there be a new life pleasing to God; for a new life with an old heart, is but superficial, and mere bodily exercise. One dead in sin will never exercise himself to godliness.

2. No person goes to heaven sleeping. The Christian life is an exercise. They have much to do, the Christian race is to run, there are many enemies to wrestle with, and the kingdom of heaven to be taken by violence. Most men look as if they expected heaven would drop into their mouth, while lying on the bed of sloth. It is not our exercise, indeed, that procures heaven, but it is a rest procured not for loiterers but labourers.

3. They must have true courage that shall come to heaven. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." True Christians must be like Caleb and Joshua among the spies, having their foreheads steeled to encounter difficulties. It is only overcomers that carry away the crown. The Christian may have sharp exercise in wrestling. Like Jacob, he may have to wrestle with God himself, Genesis xxxii. 24—30. The soul hath hard exercise in the field of divine trials, as in the case of a

call to some more than ordinary work, as when Abraham was called to offer up his son Isaac. In such cases, armies of discouragements and carnal reasonings will attack the man. These overcame Jonah for a time, but Abraham went actively through. In the case of desertions from the Lord; here the Christian is often wrapped up in a cloud of darkness, and left without light: armies of doubts and fears attack him, dragging him sometimes to the very borders of blasphemy, Psal, lxxvii. 7—10. He is carried captive from Zion to Sinai. "For thou writest bitter things against me" says Job, "and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." Job had hard work, when he said, "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." They have also to wrestle with the devil, even "against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Some people find no difficulty here; they are Satan's sleeping children, whom he will be very unwilling to awaken or disturb; but if any have a mind for heaven, they will get a black band of hellish temptations to wrestle through.

They have to wrestle also with the world. No man can go through it to heaven, but he will find it a place filled with snares, and that will require courage to face the difficulties in it. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." They must also wrestle with their own lusts. They will have a war within, as well as without. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." But of these more afterwards.

4. People must either give up the name of Christians, or else abandon their old exercise to sin and ungodliness. There is no consistency betwixt the two. "For whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." Every one has some exercise. The soul is never idle. A watch frequently goes faster when wrong, than when right; so that we call you not to more but to other exercise. If there be a principle of godliness within, however low it be, it will break forth into action at length, and act like itself. Grace in the heart, like a spring, though stopped with mud, will seek a vent one way or another.

Lastly, The Christian life, is a spiritual life. "That which is born of the spirit is spirit." What avails a carcase of duties, without the life and power of godliness. In the sacrifices of the heathens, the priest used to look to the heart, to see if it was sound. God looks to that chiefly. The Christian is the spiritual man, 1 Cor. ii. 15. and his worship is spiritual. "He worships God in spirit and in truth." We now proceed,

II. To shew some things, in which the exercise to godliness consists.

1. In carrying on a constant trade with heaven, through our Lord Jesus Christ. They say our "conversation is in heaven, from whence also, we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." They keep up communion with God, through the Mediator. "Their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." This trade consists in import and export. I may well put them in that order; for all the traders with heaven, go there empty-handed at first, and have never anything to export that is worthy, but what is the product of Immanuel's land. The soul exercised is taken up, 1. In exporting all its guilt, and importing pardons daily. The exercised soul finds guilt a heavy load to the conscience, yet its weakness is such, that it is still contracting new guilt, therefore takes it, lays it before the Lord, and sues out for pardon, and this only through Christ. The soul dares not, like the vile hypocrite in his bodily exercise, lay down a confession, a resolution to mend, drop a tear, and then snatch up a pardon; but he goes by faith to Christ, dips in that blood that is the blood of God, and comes away clean. He dares not for his very soul touch a pardon, but what is written in blood. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Again, the exercised soul is employed in exporting his weakness, poverty and wants, and importing strength and fulness from God. "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength." They receive also light and life. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. The soul comes before the Lord shaken out of itself, holding out its empty vessel, that the oil of grace may run into it; but in the meantime applies immediately to Christ as the golden pipe, through which alone the golden oil is conveyed. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." The exercised soul knows that there are no saving influences but through him, no streams of light but what shines through the vail of the flesh of Christ, and no life but what comes through him "that was dead and is alive," and no strength but comes from him "that hath the seven Spirits of God."

The soul is also employed in exporting particular petitions, and importing answers of prayer, and returning praises. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: and unto thee shall the vow be paid. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." What are the prayers of many but just bodily exercise. They neither come from the heart, nor does the heart go with them, nor after them, to see what success they have at the throne. The exercised soul will have particular suits before the Lord, and will be waiting

on while the suit is in dependence, that a gracious return may at length come. "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." And this will be returned again, in the voice of praise. And all through Christ, "in whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by the faith of him." It was the custom of the Molossrans, when they were to seek a favour of their prince, to take up his son in their arms.

2. In a spiritual performance of duties. Christians "exercise themselves to have a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man." Leaving the corpse of duties, which of itself is but bodily exercise, I shall touch at the life and soul of duties, in which the exercise to godliness consists. The exercise to godliness in this point, consists in these six things:

1. In getting the soul fixed in that point, what is sin and what is duty in particular cases, before we put hand to it. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." It is surely gross religion, when people find a thing in itself lawful, they make no more questions about it, and ask not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. Remarkable is that word, "ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." That is, though a thing seem very easy to us at first, as to sin or duty, yet examine it accurately as in a pair of balances. Here is matter of exercise, in which the soul will find much need of careful noticing of the word of the Lord, that is a lamp to the feet, looking to the law and to the testimony. There is need also, of a wise observation of Providence, which in subserviency to the word, is the Lord's eye set on his people to guide them. This is an eminent part of the exercise of godliness. "For whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. This must be attended with an humble dependence on the Lord for light. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." This dependence is the union of faith and self-denial, by which the soul is laid before the Lord in any matter, as a sheet of clean paper, that he may write on it what his own mind is, keeping the soul in suspense, till the Lord himself cast the balance; not like those who dissembled in their hearts, when they sent Jeremiah to pray for them to the Lord, "saying declare unto us, and we will do it;" but when he declared the answer, "they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God." Jer. xlii. 20, 21.

2. In doing the duty because it is the will of God, which must be not only the rule, but also the reason of your duties, otherwise they

are but bodily exercise. "I seek not mine own will," said Jesus, "but the will of him that sent me." As the belief of a truth is not faith, unless a man believe because God hath said it; so a duty is not a part of godliness, unless it be done because God hath commanded it. "I will keep," says David, "the commandments of my God." Now if a person does a thing because God commands it, he will not stick at any thing, where he sees the will of God plain, Gen. xxii. The Christian course is a walk unto all well-pleasing, not of men's selves, but of God.

3. In doing our duty to the glory of God. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The end in all things is a principal thing, and a perverting of this, perverts the whole work. Seeing God is the first principle of all goodness, natural or moral, he must be the chief end of it also, to whom all must be referred, as the waters being lifted up from the sea to the clouds, return to it again. And men may even as lawfully make themselves their God, as their chief end in their actions, Zech. vii. 5, 6. God will never be the rewarder of that duty, of which he is not the end. What though a servant work very busily, if he be working for himself will the master own it? Let a man pray, mourn, watch, and do every duty, all that is not enough! if God be not your chief end in all these, they are but a costly sacrifice to the idol self: for we know "that skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life." Alas! is not all turned upside down with the most part. God is made the mean, ourselves the end; so that the good works of many, are but a serving themselves of God, not a serving of God. The Jewish doctors called God *Place*, intimating that the godly soul dwells not in the barren region of self, but in God; even as the needle in the compass, touched with a good loadstone, turns still to the north, whatever winds blow.

4. In doing our duties in the strength of Christ. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." "Even the devils," said the disciples to their Lord, "are subject to us through thy name." You have no more warrant to act in duty from your own strength, than to depend upon your own righteousness. You can only say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." Men must act as they live, now the godly soul lives by Christ. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood," saith Jesus, "dwelleth in me, and I in him. He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." The Christian then must act by him. Do you think that any fruit will relish in

heaven, but that which grows upon the true vine. The hypocrite is a tree that hath its own root in the ground, hence he turns into himself, summoning together all his natural powers for duty. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord; for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh." But the godly person is a branch, whose fruit depends upon influence from the stock to which it is united; hence he dares not trust to his natural powers, gifts, nor inherent graces, seeing these depend on Christ, as light on the sun, and are but rays, not the fountain of light. But he goes out of himself, in the way of believing, for duties, saying, "I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me." Let men in their bodily exercise, like common boatmen, serve themselves with their oars; the soul exercised to godliness, will depend on Christ, for the influences of his Spirit, saying, "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Isaac was born of a barren woman.

5. In doing it out of love to God in Christ. I say in Christ; for whatever deluded enthusiasts say; whatever Christless hypocrites and moralists, who know not God, think; it is impossible for a guilty creature to love God but in Christ, seeing God out of Christ is a consuming fire. "We love him, because he first loved us." Our love to God is but the reflex of God's love to us. God's love darts its beams to us no way but through the vail of the flesh of Christ; and it is through the same vail our love returns to him. Now the Christian labour is a work and labour of love. What comes not to God out of love he regards not; for in that case he gets the hand, but not the heart.

Lastly, In directing all our duties to God, through Christ. As grace for duties comes from the Lord, so duty rightly managed, is the returning of that grace to God, in duty; as the men that got the talents, improved them for their master. Now as there is no saving receipts from heaven, but through Christ; so no acceptable returns but through him. God will not hear praise but through him, and the exercised soul will not dare offer it to him; but through Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Nor a prayer but what comes through his mouth, 1 Kings viii. 39; nor a good work will he receive, but what is dipped in his blood, though it were a sacrifice of our own blood for his cause. The martyrs "have all washed their robes, and

made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The Holy One of Israel will not touch an offering, but what comes through the hands of the holy Jesus. Alas! many if they get some victory over a lust, some steps walked cleanly, they will go even forward to God with them, because they know not God. Bullocks offered on the altar at Bethel were abominable, when turtles were accepted on the altar at Jerusalem.

3. The exercise of godliness consists in an habitual and actual mortification of lusts. They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.

4. In resisting temptations from the devil. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

5. In keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, the things of the world, and the men of the world.

6. In rightly managing the cross, and extracting the sweet of it.

Lastly, In the proper management of divine trials. The length of the preceding part of the discourse, prevents me from illustrating these particulars. I can only add for the use of what hath been said,

1. It may strike terror on the profane world, who are exercised to nothing but wickedness. "An heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children." Many will not so much as meddle with the bodily exercise of religion, but soul and body, both are devoted to the service of the devil. Your exercise is coming when you will neither rest day nor night. "For if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly, and the sinner appear."

2. It may strike terror on formal hypocrites, who know nothing of religion but bodily exercise, as if they were serving an idol that had eyes, but saw not; ears, but heard not: or they were mere lumps of spiritless clay, and the soul were for no use in the body, but to keep it a while from rotting. Ah sirs! if this be religion that we have been speaking of, then there is little religion in the world. Some that have been of long standing in a profession, may even begin again. Consider where you are and in what this will end.

3. It may fill the faces of sleeping Christians with shame. These things have been their exercise, but they are not much engaged that way now. Arise, and go to your work again. God will awaken you at length, it may be in a very terrible manner; that though you may be saved, yet it may be so as by fire.

Lastly, Let me exhort all to godliness, and to the exercise of godliness. It is the most pleasant life, even a heaven on earth.

"For wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is the most profitable exercise: "for godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Go to Christ for it, for the residue of the Spirit is with him. He hath the seven Spirits of God for dead souls. Amen.

Ettrick, August 29, 1714.

[Sabbath after the Sacrament.]

SERMON XI.

PSALM xlv. 10,

Hearken O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.

THIS Psalm is a marriage song. It celebrates the marriage of king Jesus, with the daughter of Zion, the church of believers; and has no respect to Solomon's marriage with Pharoah's daughter, as many have thought. For the royal Bridegroom is here represented as a mighty warrior, vers. 3, 4, 5; whereas Solomon was no ways such, but eminently a man of peace. Besides, how can what is said, ver. 6, any way agree to Solomon. The apostle expressly determines that it is said to Christ, Heb. i. 8. The first part of the psalm is directed to Christ. The second part, which begins with the text, is directed to his spouse. The scope of these words is not to solicit the bride's consent. She is supposed to be gained already, and espoused to king Jesus, vers. 9, 13. But the design of the text is to shew Christ's espoused bride, how she may be most acceptable, and best please her husband, ver. 11. If it be asked, Who is the speaker? Not to insist upon the various conjectures about it, I think the same person who saith to the Son, ver. 6, "Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever," in the text speaks to the spouse; that is, God the Father, Heb. i. 8, compared with ver. 5.

These words then, are the Father's advice to the newly espoused bride, how she may please her husband, his Son. And in them is to be considered,

1. The appellation given to the soul espoused to Christ: *Daughter.* Here is the name which believers receive. The person that natu-

rally was a child of the devil, on the espousals with the Son of God, becomes a child of God. Christ's Father accounts the soul espoused to his Son, his daughter. Though he brings home a spouse out of an ill house, and has nothing with her, yet his Father welcomes her into his family, and gives her no worse word than daughter.

2. The advice. Many consider the last clause only as the advice; and the first only as a preface to it, to stir up the spouse to take the advice. But the pointing in the Hebrew, plainly shews there are two purposes in this verse, and the connecting of them with it, also confirms it, which otherwise would be redundant. So there are two parts of this advice; or two advices here to the spouse, how she is to please her husband.

1. She must be very obsequious to her husband, and in all things to follow him as his own shadow. This is proposed in these words, *hearken* and *consider*. Hebrew, *hear* and *look;* namely, to thy husband. Let thine ear and eye be upon him, to hear and receive his orders, that you may obey them. Thus God said to Abraham, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." You must look to him to observe his motions and countenance, that you may suit yourself to him in all things. This is what a dutiful wife owes to her husband. While one is a single woman, she is mistress of herself, but when once espoused to her husband, she is no more so. "Her desire must be to her husband, and he shall rule over her." Her husband's will must be hers. Her ear must be to him, and her eye upon him, that she may please him well in all things lawful, and suit herself to his desires. So while you were not espoused to Christ, you took your own will; but it is not your duty to determine for yourself, but to hear and obey what he determines you to do. Your eye was upon your own inclinations to gratify them, but now it must be upon your husband to suit yourself to his desires. "Behold," says the psalmist, "as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us."

The pointing of the words is emphatical. "Hear O daughter," are two words joined in one, which, according to the propriety of the language, denotes acceleration from a vehemency of affection; so they point out the vehement love of Christ's Father to his Son's spouse—his earnestness that she may please her husband—and the readiness of that obedience which she owes to him.

Though hearing and looking are two different acts, yet they are here joined together; denoting that they do both together, hear him, and look to him at once.

This is amplified by the manner in which she should hear him; inclining her ear, as people do that do not hear well, or that would be sure to hear and understand well what is spoken. So it notes the utmost diligence in Christ's spouse, to understand her Lord's mind, and comply with it.

2. She must renounce and leave all others for her husband. This also according to the law of marriage in the text. "Forget also thine own people, and thy Father's house." She must not so much as entertain a secret desire after her Father's house. The more she minds them, the less pleasing will she be. More of this afterwards.

Doctrine 1. It is the privilege of the soul espoused to Christ, to be a child of the house of heaven, or Christ's spouse is the Father's daughter. This is the believer's privilege, and this is the way by which it is attained. "To them that believe on him, Jesus gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." I shall here only inquire a little what they have by it.

1. That they may call God Father, and that is of more value than a thousand worlds. The most profane wretch may call him Lord, the hypocrite may call him Master; but Father is a kindly name, which only believers may call him. They may at all times cry unto him, "Abba, Father." Abba is the same, read it backward or foreward; and in all the changes of dispensation, God is still the espoused soul's Father. Hypocrites will call him so, but God disowns the relation, and says to them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the deeds of your father you will do." But he encourages his people to do it, saying, "Wilt thou not from this time, cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth."

2. Access to God. They come much nearer to him than others. They may come forward, when others must stand back. "In Christ they have boldness, and access to God with confidence, by the faith of him." God allows them a holy boldness and confidence with him as children, to pour their complaints in his bosom, to tell him all their wants; and never did a father take so much delight in the talking of his children to him, as God doth in hearing his people.

3. Special immunities and freedom. Kings' children have great immunities. They are free of tribute. But God's children have the greatest. They are free from the law as a covenant of works, which is a yoke wreathed about the necks of all others. Free from the curse, which lies hard and fast on all others. Free from all condemnation, thundered out against others every day. Nay, from the hurt of every thing. "Nothing," says their husband, "shall by any means hurt you." Death itself, that kills others, shall not hurt them, Rom. viii. 35—39.

4. Pity, provision, and protection. The severe avenger of sin pities their infirmities, as a father pitieth his children. He that fights against the wicked as an enemy, will protect them. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children shall have a place of refuge." Come what will, they shall be provided for. Though the Lord make not provision for their lusts, he will see to provide for their necessities. Matth. vi. 30—82.

5. Seasonable correction. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." This is a benefit of the covenant, Psal. lxxxix. 30—32 Nothing more true in the way of privilege, than that some may better steal a horse, than others look over the dyke. Some smart more severally for a lustful look, than others for taking their full swing that way; some, more for deadness in prayer, than others for neglecting it altogether. What is the reason? A small fault in a child will be checked, when a greater in another will be overlooked.

6. Perseverence. "The servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." The term day is coming, when God and such as are not espoused shall part, but they that are, never. If a child wander from his father's house, he must be sought, and brought back again. A servant of the house, may be turned out of doors, as Hagar was; nay, a son of God by nature, may be turned off, as Adam and the fallen angels were; but they that are God's children, by being espoused to his Son, can never, Psalm lxxxix. 30—34.

Lastly, They have a portion according to their Father's quality. "They are heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." So all is theirs. Grace is theirs, glory is theirs. Their portion will tell out through all eternity. Their Father gives them of his moveables as he sees meet, and these may be removed, but their portion is not of these; they shall receive a kingdom which cannot be moved.

Use.—Exhortation 1. To such as are not espoused to Christ. Let this move you to come into this match, that hitherto have not given yourselves away to Christ in the marriage covenant. While you are so, you are children of the house of hell. Your father the devil has hindered you from this match, having a mind to bestow you upon lusts, which you like better than the Lord. But remember I tell you, if any break not off this match in time, it shall be consummated, so as you and your sins shall never part through the ages of eternity. Sin comes to its perfection in hell, as well as grace in heaven.

2. You that are espoused to Christ, believe that you are children of the house of heaven; believe your privilege, that you may have the free use of it. If the people of God could follow it with

application, it would be a powerful mean of holiness. They would abhor sin as below their dignity; they would hate it as offensive to their Father; they would despise the world as too mean a thing for one so highly advanced. The unbelief and doubts of Christ's spouse, are no friends to her sanctification. I hope some of you have been in good earnest engaging with Christ in the marriage covenant; now I would have you to believe that your husband's Father calls you daughter, and looks upon you as a child of his house.

OBJECTION. How will I ever get it believed? ANSWER. If you cast not your eye on free grace, and expect not something from God that is not after the manner of men, you will never get it believed. But I will offer you some helps.

1. Have you accepted of Christ, as he offered himself in the marriage covenant, in all his offices. Were your hearts joined to Christ as well as your hands; that is, that your souls within you, did take him for your lord and husband, for all and instead of all, without any known reserve; after you had considered his holiness as well as his mercy, his cross as well as his crown; then I declare you espoused to Christ; John i. 12; Psal. lxxiii. 25; and therefore children of the house of heaven, according to the text.

2. Are you striving to be like the house of heaven. One newly married and brought home out of her father's house to her Husband's Father's house, will be labouring to suit herself to the house into which she is come, and to lay aside the manners of the house from which she came; especially if the two houses are enemies to one another, as in this case, that she may please her husband and his Father. If it be not so with you, though you be communicants, I will not bid you believe that you are children. But if it be so, why do you not believe it; 1 John iii. 1—3. Sin and self, are the things in which the houses differ.

3. Is the interest of the house of heaven your interest, have you joined interest with that house? While the damsel remains at home, she joins interest with her Father's house; but as soon as she is clothed with a husband, her interest is divided from that of her father's house, and she joins interest with that of her husband's, for now she is of that house. And if you be children of the house by espousals with the Son, though you never had any kindly concern for the interest of Christ before, you will have it now: You will have a kindly concern for the honour of the house, the ordinances, and laws and manners of the house, the children of the house, and all that you know belongs to it. Only let me tell you all that concern will centre in holiness and the power of godliness, which is the

main interest that house is carrying on in the world. Your zeal for pure ordinances, discipline, and government of the church, will be because of their tendency to holiness. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men.

Doctrine 2. It is the duty of the espoused to Christ, carefully to hear his will, and observe his motions, so as they may suit themselves to his pleasure in all things. This I take to be the meaning of this first clause. For explaining this doctrine, I shall,

I. Show what is imported in it.

II. What it is for Christ's spouse to hear his will.

III. How she is to eye him and observe his motions, so as she may suit herself to his pleasure.

IV. Give reasons of the doctrine. We are then,

I. To show what is imported in it. It imports,

1. That Christ's spouse is not left to walk at random. She is to notice every step of her carriage. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." The careless walking at all adventures, is walking contrary to the Lord, and is opposed to hearkening; Lev. xxvi. 21. The espoused are not under the law as a covenant of works, but they are not lawless, but under the law to Christ. The iron yoke of the first covenant is off, but the soft yoke of the second covenant is on them.

2. That those that are espoused to Christ, must renounce their own will, and not seek to please themselves. "If any man," saith Jesus "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Our corrupt self will seek this, and that, to please itself, as it was wont to get in our Christless condition; but we must deny its cravings now, forasmuch as by our espousals with Christ, we have put our desires into the hand of another, to grant them or not, as he thinks fit, according to the law. Gen. iii. 16. In our espousals we made this renunciation of our own will, let us not draw back when it comes to the point of practice, lest we shew we are but mocking, not in earnest.

3. That our great aim in all things, must be to please our Lord and husband, this is the law of marriage. "She that is married, careth for the things of the world, that she may please her husband." This is the law of Christ to his spouse, "That we walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Displease whom we will, we must please him. Be they the greatest on earth, and be the danger of displeasing them ever so great, we must not run the risk of our Lord's displeasure for them all; even as a dutiful wife will never

lay the pleasing of her husband and his servants in a balance. So Daniel and his fellows, would not please the king, by worshipping the golden image which he set up.

4. That we must trample upon our own inclinations when contrary to his, and suit ourselves to his will, as Abraham did with respect to offering up his son. Is our inclination to the world? it is not his will, therefore we must subdue this carnal inclination. Is it our desire to be rich and honourable? perhaps this is not his will, but that we should be poor and under a cloud: we must suit ourselves to his pleasure, and "learn in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content."

5. That when Christ's will and pleasure and our own go together, our main end must not be to please ourselves, but to please him. "Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, do all to the glory of God." Otherwise, we do not hearken to our husband, but to ourselves; as those who will please their husband in those things in which they please themselves, and which they would do, whether they pleased their husband or not. Do we profess to hear and obey him? Let us then do these things, that we may give contentment to the heart of our Lord. Do we eat and drink? Let it be because Christ says, "thou shalt not kill." Do we marry? Let it be because he says, "do not commit adultery." Do we work? Let it be because he says, "do not steal."

6. That we must not think to please him with our own devices. Christ's spouse hearkens and considers what her Lord says, that she may do it. The whore of Rome speaks and commands for pleasing Christ, what she never heard from himself, and thereby declares herself as an imperious whorish woman. So does the Church of England, contrary to the duty of the spouse of Christ; in that they suit themselves to their own pleasure, not to Christ's. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." So many take up opinions and practices which they never learned from Christ; and while they think to please him with them, they incur his displeasure, for thinking to please him with the productions of their own fancy.

Lastly, That our ear must be to himself, our eye on him, that we may know his will to do it. Psal. cxxiii. 2, quoted above. This implies these things, that we must be content to know sin and duty. Many sit with much ease under the covert of ignorance. What the ear hears not, the heart receives not. By their conduct, they say unto God, "depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." They entertain their lusts, as some did intercommuned persons in time of persecution; they are content they

be in the house, but they do not desire to know it. That not hearkening, they think they have not to obey. Again, we must learn what is sin and what is duty from himself. The apostle tells "wives, that if they would know any thing, let them ask their husbands at home." Our husband is in heaven, we on earth, yet we may learn of him. His word is in our hands. His spirit is into our hearts, if we be espoused to him. We want not the holy oracle to consult, if willing to learn. Farther, we must apply ourselves diligently, to learn of him our duty. We must incline our ear. We are so dull and slow at taking up our duty, there is so much din about us by our unruly hearts, while our Lord puts our lesson into our hands, that if we do not take very great care, we may mistake. Finally, we must hearken with a readiness to obey, as the servant hears his orders to do them, and a dutiful wife hears her husband's pleasure to suit herself to it. Hearing that is not for obeying, our Lord regardeth not.

Use.—Let us exhort you to hear and observe Christ's motions, so as to suit yourselves to your husband's pleasure.

Motive 1. This would be a noble evidence that indeed you are espoused to Christ. Would you not fain know, that you were espoused to Christ for ever, at the communion last sabbath? Would not your hearts leap for joy, to know that Christ and you have met, never to part. This will evidence it. "For," saith Jesus, "whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

2. For what end did you take the royal bridegroom by the hand? You heard the laws of the espousals, that you were to renounce your wills particularly, and take him wholly, only, and for ever. Will you stand to it, or will you draw back?

3. Which of the two, the bridegroom or his spouse, is most fit to be the guide in the married state? Did you not acknowledge you were not fit to guide yourselves through this wilderness, and therefore gave up yourselves to him as a prophet; not able to manage and protect yourselves, and therefore gave up yourselves to him as a king and husband, to rule and defend you? Are you wiser or abler now? Do you already repent your choices?

Lastly, Thus you would have a comfortable state till the great day of the marriage. You shall be your husband's delight, Psal. xlv. 11; but if not, you discover your hypocrisy, or at best you will grieve his spirit, and make your own condition uncomfortable.

II. We proceed to shew, what it is for Christ's spouse to hear his will. Besides what hath been already said, you must consider for this, how Christ speaks to his spouse, signifying his will.

1. By his works. All the works of God, are speaking works. He speaks by the works of creation, these silent preachers of his will, Psal. xix. 2—4. See how the Psalmist heard and answered this voice of his: "When I consider," said he, "the heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" The very heathens are rendered inexcusable, by this voice of the Lord, how much more Christ's spouse, if she hear it not. The work of redemption is a speaking work: and what is the language of it? "It is we are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Nay, all the ten commandments come to Christ's spouse in the language of the Redeemer's blood: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. He speaks to his spouse by the works of providence. There is not a mercy but it hath a voice, nor a rod thou meetest with, but it speaks. "Hear then, O daughter, the rod, and who hath appointed it.

2. By our own consciences. That is the bosom preacher, our Lord's deputy-governor, whom he hath placed in every man's breast; and every deaf ear turned to it speaking from the word, is a refusing of him that speaketh from heaven. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly."

3. He speaks to us by the word. He speaks to us in the word read. The Bible is the book of instructions, which Christ puts into the hands of the espoused, to shew them how they are to please him, till the marriage of the Lamb. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience, and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." Therefore, they who intend to perform their vows of espousals, will be conversant with the Bible. He speaks also by the word preached. "He that heareth you," said Jesus of his disciples, "heareth me." Taking Christ, you took him for a prophet, and by the minister of the word, he exerciseth the office. So they that wish to know how to please Christ, will wait on the ordinances for that end.

4. By his Spirit, whereby we have the mind of Christ. "The Comforter," saith Jesus, "which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, she shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." And your not hearing him, thus grieves the Spirit, and provokes him to depart. Now our duty with respect to these consists in these two:

1. We must discern Christ's voice in one and all of these, saying with the spouse, "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh." Samuel heard the voice of God, but thought it had been Eli's. So alas! when we hear our duty, ofttimes we do not take up God as the party speaking to us, hence we are nothing bettered.

2. We must comply with his voice. "This," saith God, "is my beloved Son, hear ye him." To hear and not obey, is but to expose yourselves to double stripes. He is our Lord and king, and must have our obedience to his will which, in the day of espousals, we take for our law. This is the hearing which the text requires. And so we must hear him only whoever speak. Satan, the world, and our lusts, will each of them have their word, and their will is always contrary to Christ's will. But whatever you did before, being now espoused to Christ, you are to hear him only, giving a deaf ear to all other.

Again, We must hear him without disputing. Christ's subjects are not to dispute his will, but to obey. Any intimation of his will, is sufficient to determine us to a compliance. "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me." So did Abraham obey; at the call of God he "went out, not knowing whither he went." They to whom Christ's bare will and command, is not a sufficient reason for compliance, give no evidence of their being espoused to him. Finally, we must hear and obey, because it is his will. To do his will, but not because it is his will, is not near him; for Christ's will must be the reason, as well as the rule of our obedience. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. We are now,

III. To shew how Christ's spouse is to eye him and observe his motions, so as she may suit herself to his pleasure.

1. We must eye him as our Lord and Master, whose will must be our law. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters; and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us." "Have we given our ears to be bored, that we might be his servants for ever, then let us look to him as our master, and never more say in word or deed, who is Lord over us. Let us never refuse any work which he puts into our hand, whether doing work or suffering work.

2. Eye him as our teacher. Christians are Christ's disciples. Scholars among the Jews, sat at the feet of their masters, as Paul at the feet of Gamaliel; so must we sit at our Lord's feet meekly, and humbly to learn of him. It is little we know of God or our duty, and for that end, we profess to have taken Christ for our

teacher. We must then learn of him what we are to do, and what to forbear.

3. Eye him as our guide and leader. We are in a wilderness, where we are apt to mistake our way. We will never get our way to heaven without a guide. God hath given Christ for that purpose, even a leader and commander to the people, and we have been professing to receive him as such; let us then keep our eye on our leader, to follow him whithersoever he goes. "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

4. Eye him as our last and chief end, to whose honour we may direct the whole course of our life. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Self must no more be the mark we aim at, but God must have the room of self, endeavouring to please him in all things. Thus the apostle made Christ the end of his life. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

5. Eye him as our witness in all things. Wherever we are, he is present with us. Let us walk as under the view of his pure eyes. He sees what is within us, as well as without us. Let us take heed to our spirits, as under the inspection of the heart-searching God.

6. Eye him as our Judge, for to him we must give an account. Did the thief see the eye of the judge upon him, while his eyes go out after his covetousness, it would oblige him to hold up his hands.

Lastly, Eye him as our husband. That is a name of love and authority, which as it binds us to obedience, so it should kindly draw us to it. And here should we observe what pleaseth, and what displeaseth him, that we may carefully follow the one, and avoid the other. This we may know both by the word and by experience. An observant Christian might have a well confirmed rule hereby, how to walk; and this should be the glass by which Christ's spouse should dress herself, taking up what pleaseth, and laying aside what displeaseth her husband.

We should also diligently observe his countenance towards us, whether it be with us, or turned from us; that if with us, we may be careful to keep it; if turned from us, that we may recover it. Two things in which the spouse of Christ often shews her neglect of her husband.

We should also observe his dispensations, and way of his dealing with us. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." Some courses deprive us of the communications of his love and Spirit. Some others make to us a prosperous time while we follow them. Let us

eye these, to follow the one and avoid the other. It now remains,

IV. To give reasons of the doctrine.

1. Why these that are espoused to Christ should suit themselves to his pleasure:

1. Because we owe this to him as our Lord and Husband, by virtue of our marriage covenant, whereby we have taken him as our Lord, our head; and by virtue of the relation of which we claim the privileges, we must also comply with the duties. "For a son honoureth his father, and a servant his master." If we have any respect then, to our own voluntary covenant, the ordinance of God, and the duty of that honourable relation, we should suit ourselves to his pleasure. This God has made the due of every husband from his relative, and shall it not be given to the great Lord and Husband of our souls. "Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands, in every thing."

2. Because he is our Lord God to whom we owe absolute unlimitted obedience. "For he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." Our Maker is our husband, and therefore double ties are upon us to suit ourselves to his pleasure. Shall not the Creator's will be the creature's law? He that made us, have dominion over us? What a strange matter is it that the potsherds should rise up against the potter; the will of man to offer to take place of the will of God.

3. Because without controversy he is fittest to be head. In other cases, the husband is not always fitted to be head in respect of wisdom; yet even in such a case, "the woman ought not to usurp authority over the man." How much more then ought we to be subject to this husband, who is light while we are darkness, who is the wisdom of the Father, and undoubtedly knows better what is good for us, than we ourselves do.

4. This is the very end for which we are espoused to Christ. "I have espoused you," says Paul, to believers, "to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Man's will by Adam's fall, fell to be at variance with the will of God; whereas before, it lay straight with it. To recover man to this rectitude, he is united to Jesus Christ, as to a husband. And therefore, whensoever the marriage of the Lamb is consummated, the end shall be fully obtained. There shall never more be the least jarring betwixt the will of God and the saints.

2. Why we should hear him and observe his motions to that end, that we may suit ourselves to his pleasure.

1. Because we are naturally in the dark as to what is his pleasure. Unknown as it is, our hearts are against it, our will is opposite to his, and we cannot learn it but from himself. "No man

hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. Never was a wild ass more untractable than we are, much need then to learn.

2. Because we will never suit ourselves to his pleasure, if we do not humbly keep our ears and eyes on him; for our will and pleasure are the contrary way: so that, in scripture phrase, for a man to do what seems good in his own eyes, is the same as to do what is hateful in the eyes of the Lord.

3. Because we are in a state of trial, in which we must lay our account to have ill advice from the devil and the world, and our ears will be forced to hear many things wrong. So that there is a necessity to stop our ears to all others, and to keep them open to him alone.

3. Why ought we to hear so carefully, inclining the ear?

1. Because even Christ's spouse is dull of hearing. Jesus said, even to his disciples, "O fools! and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Our ears open easily to Satan's temptations, but when Christ speaks, our ears are heavy. "God speaks once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not."

2. Because ofttimes we are at a distance from him when he is speaking to us. Yea, a locked door between him and us; Song v. 2. Yea, a partition wall to interrupt the communication; Song ii. 9. There is also much noise about us, occasioned by Satan, the world, and our evil hearts, while Christ speaks so that we cannot hear him.

USE. Of Exhortation.—O! then, whosoever pretends to be espoused to Christ, suit yourselves to his pleasure in all things, and carefully hear and observe his motions for that end. Let his will be your will. Suit yourselves to the will of his commandments, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?" To the will of his providence. Do it cheerfully, and without grudging.

MOTIVE 1. Consider what he did for us, suiting himself to our case. What Zipporah said to Moses, he may say to his spouse: A bloody spouse hast thou been to me. If cords of love will bind us to our duty, in this we need not want them. He left the bosom of his Father, the hallelujahs of angels, took upon him our nature, and died for us; and shall we not behave dutifully to him, who did all this for us. Consider Christ pleased not himself, that he might save us? His Father put a cup of unmingled wrath into his hand, and bade him drink it, otherwise his designed spouse should drink it for ever. His holy human nature shivered at it, saying, "O Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" but he suited himself to his Father's will, for our sake. Besides, has he not

bought the satisfaction of our dutifulness to him, at a dear enough rate. We had never stood espoused to him, had he not by his death, removed the impediments which lay in the way of it. And on every part of the spouse's duty to him, may be written, "The price of blood!"

2. The angels in heaven, suit themselves to his pleasure, in all things. His will is done in heaven. They run at his command. They stand and wait his orders, and the least piece of service put in their hand, they refuse not. They are more excellent creatures than we; and shall we not be ashamed to be refractory to him, whom all the angels obey. He is their head indeed, as well as ours, but he is not their husband, that is the peculiar privilege of the saints.

3. His pleasure is that which is best for us. He bids us do nothing but what is for our good; yea, for our best. That which seems heaviest in his pleasure concerning us, is really for our advantage. "He even chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." He hath so linked together our duty and and interest, that it is impossible to separate them. We cannot consult our own happiness, but by suiting ourselves to his pleasure. We cannot be miserable, but by slighting his directions. Consider we need but our own will to ruin us. It is a fearful thing for a man to be given up to himself, Hosea iv. 17. Let us carve for ourselves, and certainly we will be like the child that cuts his own fingers. O! what a work do we make to get our own will, and yet a more fearful plague we cannot meet with out of hell. A man left to himself, will be his own ruin. Whereas on the contrary, we need but suit ourselves to his pleasure, and we are happy. We have then a sure hold of our true interest. Whatever is his will concerning his spouse, is really best for her. For why, is it the product of infinite wisdom mixed with infinite love. Could we but believe this, how easy would it be. If it be his pleasure thou be poor and afflicted, it is best.

4. It will be a great satisfaction to thy Lord and husband, if thou suit thyself to his pleasure; and would you not desire to give contentment to the heart of Christ, "that he may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied?" Would you be lovely in his eyes, and have communion with him, this is the way to attain it, "for so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty." O! the many sweet hours of fellowship with heaven, the ravishing sweetness, the blessed communications of the love of the Lord, of which Christ's spouse robs herself, by neglecting her husband.

5. Your neglect and refractoriness, will be grieving to his spirit. The wicked world despise his will, and will have their own, if it should ruin them. But shall he be grieved also with your wilful-

ness? The nearer the relation is, in which you stand to him, the more piercing is your neglect of him. Psal. lv. 12. And the grieving of his Spirit will, sooner or later, bring a fearful confusion to your case.

9. There is a necessity for suiting yourselves to his pleasure. The rejecting of his commandments doth but lay up matter for repentance for you, and it will be bitterness in the end, go as it will, here or hereafter. Your struggle with the will of his providence is a vain struggle, "for his counsel shall stand," and what he will have crooked, thou shalt not make straight. It makes it more heavy than it would be. For fight against God who will, he will always be the conqueror.

7. The honour of your Lord and husband requires it, so shall you be a crown to him, but otherwise a dishonour to him. Oh! how is the name of God blasphemed by the undutiful conduct of those espoused to Christ.

8. While you suit not yourself to his will, you suit yourself to the will of his enemies. There is no midst. And what can you expect, but the fire of his jealousy to burn against you.

ADVICE. Put that will of yours into the Lord's hand, that he may mould it into a conformity to his own. And believe that he will do it, and in the faith of the promise use the means. Endeavour to get the firm faith of this, that what is his will is best for you, and apply that to particulars and your own spirit.

ADVICE 1. Put that will of yours in the Lord's own hand, that he may mould it into a conformity to his own. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The will of man is a refractory piece, which we can no more master of ourselves, than a child can master a giant. There is no forcing of it, and we cannot bow it of ourselves. Lay it then before the Lord often, with that, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned: for thou art the Lord my God." He is a husband that can cure the wilfulness of his spouse, can give her heart a set that it shall be according to his own. He is the only physician for the stone of the heart; and though you cannot break it, put it in his hand that he may do it. You may tell him where you are pained, as the child cried to his mother, my head, you may cry to him, my heart. You may tell him it is your burden, and you would fain be freed of it, but you cannot. You may lay it over on him, that he may do that for you, which you cannot do for yourselves.

ADVICE 2. Believe, in order to the getting of your will suited to your Lord's will. Would you have this mountain removed, it must

be done in the way of believing. There are three things I would have you to believe, 1. That you are not fit to be your own choosers. All the saints, in one voice, have given this verdict of themselves. "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob, whom he loved." God from heaven has witnessed it, in his giving Christ to be a leader, a head and husband to them; thereby not trusting them, but him, with bringing the children to glory. Christ himself has put this lesson into our hands teaching us to deny ourselves, and to be jealous of ourselves The event has proved it often, in that people getting their own will, has been their ruin. Psalm lxxviii. 29; and the best of the saints getting the reins in their own hand, have set all on fire.

Again, Believe that whatever is the Lord's will is always best for you. All our wilfulness proceeds on a mistake. We think sinful liberty best for us, ease, plenty, and the like. God knows it is otherwise, and therefore he will have us hear him for our good. To help you to believe this,

1. Consider God's will is the product of infinite wisdom, and may we not trust that infinite wisdom that contrived the world with the guiding of it? Will we hold up our taper to the sun shining in its brightness, or shall our weakness pretend to tell him what is best for his creatures? Why do we not then sink down into our seats and say, good is the will of the Lord, and let him do what seemeth him good.

2. Christ loves his spouse more dearly, and cares more for their good than they do themselves, and so whatever is his will for them is best for them. He loved them so as to lay down his life for them, and may not that evidence his will to be best for them. "As the Father," saith he, "hath loved me, so have I loved you." Why doth the Father hedge up his unruly child, why does he refuse him his will, but because he loves him?

3. By virtue of the covenant of grace, God's glory and his people's good are both in one bottom, and cannot be separated. Is his will then always most for his own glory, consequently it is most for his people's good.

4. His will is ever right; it is seldom but our will is wrong, and never right when opposite to his, Deut. xxxii. 4. There is no flaw in the way and will of God; and whatever hardships those espoused to Christ, may now seem to see in it, when they come to the other world, they will make their recantation, and say, he has done all things well.

Lastly, Consider your experience: Have you not seen many times, how God has done you good against your wills, good which you would never have got, had he given you your will.

Moreover, consider that God will make out his promise of suiting your will to his, who have put it into his hands, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. How shall we get the good of the promises, but by believing them. Have you given up your will to him, to be rectified by him, believe that he will do it, and it shall be done.

ADVICE 3. In the faith of the promise, use the means. Stretch out the withered hand to Christ. Labour to drag your hearts to a compliance with his will in all things. "For to him that hath shall be given." Study also to be heavenly, and much in converse with your husband. While the heart grows cold, it grows stiff also; but warmed with love, it becomes pliable. Consider also the relations in which he stands to you, as a Father, Husband, your King, and your God. Finally, consider the vows of God are upon you, for that effect.

[Same subject continued.]

SERMON XII.

PSALM xlv. 10,

Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.

THIS is the second advice given to the spouse of Christ, in order to the pleasing of her husband, namely, that for him, she renounce all that formerly was dearer to her than he was. The advice is delivered in figurative terms, and in it there is a plain allusion to that law of marriage, Gen. ii. 24, by which married persons are obliged to prefer their relatives to their natural parents, in point of affection and interest. When a woman is single, and at home in her father's house, her affection runs strongest to her father's family. Her interest is joined with theirs, and she conforms herself to them. But being married, her husband and his family takes the place with her; her affection must run strongest towards her husband and his family.

The advice, I think, is equivalent to that, "That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts." Or that, "as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." As if he had said, seeing ye are now espoused to Christ,

bring not your old manners and ways into your new state, but forsake and forget them, and behave no more as your father's daughter, but as Christ's spouse. In the words there is,

1. The natural relations of Christ's spouse pointed at, in contradistinction to those of her husband. She wants not relations, indeed, but they are such as she can have no credit nor good from them, but will be the worse of them, and therefore her husband has taken her out from among them, and would have her to forget them.

She has some that are her natural country people, her own people. Who are these, but the world that lieth in wickedness; and before she was espoused to Christ, she was one of their own, but he hath chosen her out of the world. Every country hath its own fashions, and in former times she followed the fashions of the country as well as the rest.

She has also a father's house in that country. Who is her father naturally but the devil? John viii. 44, and though she has left the house, yet he keeps house there still, with his children and servants; Luke xv. 15. It denotes the state of unregeneracy, which men are in while in the black state of nature, out of which, when they are brought to Christ, they are brought as it were out of their father's house. Every house has its own fashions, and Christ's spouse followed the fashion of the house as well as others, while she was in it.

2. There is the duty of Christ's spouse with respect to these. She must forget them, both of them. And here there is something supposed, that is, that Christ's spouse is apt to have a hankering after her own people and father's house, even after she has left them, as Laban alleged that Jacob sore longed after his father's house. There may be eager looks back again, while the soul minds them, and that with too much affection, not sufficiently weaned from them.

There is something also expressed, that Christ's spouse ought to forget them. Not absolutely, for she not only may, but ought to mind them for her own humiliation and thankfulness. "For we ourselves also, were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." But in respect of affection, her heart must be weaned from them, she must not desire to return to them; and in respect of practice, she must no more conform herself to them. She must forget also her people, must not conform herself to the world. Rom, xii. 2. She must forget also her father's house, her former lusts in her ignorance. A man's country is dear to him, but his father's house is dearer. So what is dearest to us in the world, must be forsaken for Christ.

DOCTRINE 1. The hearts of those espoused to Christ, are often found much unweaned from their father's house and former lusts, therefore is she taught to forget them. As it is with a childish new married woman, they have a foolish hankering after the house from which they came.

I. I shall show in what this unweanedness appears.

II. Whence it is that those who are espoused to Christ are so much unweaned from, and cannot forget their father's house and former lusts. We are then,

I. To show in what this unweanedness from their father's house and former lusts appears.

1. In the cooling of our zeal against our father's house, and the fashions thereof. Our husband's house and our father's are at war with each other; and this war is zealously prosecuted on both sides, by Michael and the dragon. When Christ's spouse then remits her zeal against sin, she appears partial in favour of her father's house. Christ finds fault with her, because "she hath left her first love." And so far as she is not with Christ, in prosecuting the quarrel vigorously, she is so far against him. So far as she is not gathering with him, she is scattering abroad. But O! how quickly does the heart harden, and how soon does sin turn from being such a frightful spectacle, as it was before, and at the espousals.

2. In kindly reflections on the entertainment in our father's house, remembering with any delight or pleasure our former ways. The Israelites were not sufficiently weaned from the house of their bondage in Egypt, and they gave evidence of this by weeping, and saying, "who shall give us flesh to eat." We should never reflect on our former evil ways, but with shame and sorrow; but often, by kindly reflecting on these things, we as it were return to our vomit. And the looking back on them stirs up love, not loathing.

3. In uneasiness under the restraints of our husband's house, saying, with the Israelites, "here there is nothing at all besides this manna, before our eyes." A heart used to sinful liberty, cannot easily take up with the restraint. The soul used to gadding abroad, will not easily become a keeper at home. But were the soul duly weaned, it would be very easy under all the holy restraints of the house of heaven, and would find a free walk within the inclosure of the divine law. The soul will say with David, "I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts."

4. In hankering after our father's house, and former lusts, in our hearts turning back to Egypt. Nothing can be more plain evidence, than these rueful looks to our old lusts. This was the fault of Lot's wife, for which she was turned into a pillar of salt, yet it

is most incident to the children of men. When Adam was in paradise, his heart was hankering after the forbidden fruit; and though Christ brings sinners into a paradise on earth, yet they are still greedily looking over the hedge.

5. In kindly entertaining any sent from our father's house; by this people express their old kindness to the house. Our father, as long as we are in the world, will be sending to us; we will not want messengers of Satan, even temptations to our old sins; but if we were duly weaned from the house, we would deny them; we would deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. We would do with them, as Elisha did with the messenger whom the king of Israel sent to take away his head; we would shut the door, and hold them fast at the door, saying, Is not the sound of their master's feet behind them.

But alas! they are readily received, they are welcomed and fed by us, according to their kind. 2 Sam. xii. 4.

6. In serving our husband after the fashion of our father's house; like a new married woman, who though she has changed the house, yet she keeps the fashions of that from which she came. So though the man will not neglect prayer, hearing, and other duties, yet he is so far unweaned, that he performs these often only as they do who are still in his father's house. This our Lord peremptorily discharges: "When thou prayest," says he, "thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are." He will have his own work done after the fashion of his own house.

7. In our stealing visits to our father's house, and secret tampering with former lusts. Stealing it must be, for our Lord and Husband will never give his consent to the meeting again. Ezek. vi. 9. But alas! how often is Christ's spouse missed out of her husband's house; her Lord is seeking her, but she is not at home, but gadding abroad, even lying in the embraces of former lusts and lovers. And though the soul that is truly married, will never rest there, but return to her first husband, Hosea ii. 7, yet that woeful departing is a sad appearance of a heart unweaned from former lovers.

Lastly, Many that have been espoused to Christ before the world, but not from the heart, quite forsake their husband, and go back, for altogether, to their father's house by their apostacy. Like the mixed multitudes that came out of Egypt, but ere they were gone far in the wilderness sounded a retreat back to the place from which they came. "The dog is thus turned to his vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. These are they that draw back into perdition." The case of many, alas! is like that of the Levite's concubine; Judges xix. Concubines were

indeed wives contracted to their husbands, though not with so great solemnity as proper wives; but they were bond servants, not free, not mistress of the family, nor could their children inherit. She played the harlot and went back to her father's house; and though means were used, yet she never came back to her husband's house, but perished in the way she had chosen. We now proceed,

II. To show whence it is that those who are espoused to Christ are so much unweaned from, and cannot forget their father's house and former lusts. There are some who have been joined to Christ only by the hand, who have given him the hand, but never gave him the heart. They are hypocrites, who have in profession only accepted of Christ in the marriage covenant. Others are joined to him with the heart who have really given themselves away to Christ without any dissimulation, as all true believers have done. Both these may fall under this charge, though they cannot go back an equal length to their former ways. Now for the reasons:

1. The consent of many to Christ is an involuntary consent. It was but a forced pretence, that ever they came into the covenant, no wonder then that they quickly look back. There are many things that may force a consent to the gospel covenant from a man; such as the power of the rod, an awakened conscience, and the like, may do it. Psal. lxxviii. 34, 36, 37. The stone thrown up in the air, will fall down of its own accord, when the force ceaseth. So will a rod forcibly bowed together extend itself again, when the hand that bowed it is removed; and a sow brought into a palace, will return to wallow in the mire, as soon as the restraint is removed. So will the heart return that is driven, but not drawn by love, into the covenant.

2. Because the heart has not been freely loosed from some one sin or another. Satan sometimes makes such an offer to his vassals, as Pharaoh did to Moses. "I will let you go," said he, "that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away." They accept. They go a great length with that young man, Mark x. 20, but still, as he, so they lack one thing, verse 21. There is some one lust or another, with which they can never freely part. Any thing but that they will do, and when they seem to be putting their lusts in Christ's hands to destroy them, the secret voice of their hearts concerning that one is, what David charged Joab concerning Absalom, "Deal gently with the young man." And this serves Satan as a handle, by which he draws them back.

3. Because sin has never been made bitter enough to them, they have never been thoroughly weaned from their father's house.

Hence, they are as the drunkard, who says, "they have stricken me, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." Men will never forget, nor cease to suck the breasts of their lusts, till God lay gall and wormwood on them in such measure as to make the enjoyment of them more bitter than the want of them. What lightly comes, lightly goes. They who never had the fallow ground of their hearts ploughed up, and ploughed deep enough, must needs sow among thorns. Jer. iv. 3, 4. The child that never found bitterness on the breasts, is easily set on again; and the soul that never tasted the bitterness of sin, will break over purposes, vows and resolutions, to get to it again.

4. Because by reason of their not living by faith on Christ, they find not that soul satisfaction in him which they expected. No wonder she long to be back at her father's house, who is disappointed of comfort in her husband's. The heart of man is an empty, hungry thing, that must always have something to feed upon; and if it feed not on Christ, it will go back to feed on lusts. The mixed multitude that came out of Egypt, not being brought, as they expected, to Canaan directly, they soon began to long after the enjoyment of Egypt.

5. Because there is a principle of corruption in the best, which still inclines the wrong way. "But I see," says Paul, "another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Hence the best have deceitful hearts; "yea, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." They are as deceitful bows, ever ready to carry beside the mark. They are difficult to be known, and unworthy to be trusted. The root of all sin, the spawn of all iniquity is in them.

We are naturally simple souls. However resolute and peremptory we may be in things carnal, we are all of an easy temper, easily led aside to our own spiritual loss: easily beguiled in things that concern our souls' welfare. Esau, though a cunning hunter, was easily betrayed in the matter of the birthright.

We are also unstable souls. Unstable as water. A good frame is hard to get, and easily lost. It is like letters written in the sand, that a blast of wind doth obliterate. Hence the soul often turns aside very quickly, and on very slender occasions, as Peter at the voice of a maid, and that even soon after some remarkable manifestations from the Lord. Thus it is said, that even "the disciples considered not the miracles of the loaves, for their heart was hardened."

Lastly, Because those of our father's house are still exerting themselves to make those espoused to Christ to keep up their former correspondence with them. While we are in the world, we will not want temptations. Satan is very diligent to improve all opportunities to make Christ's spouse deal falsely in her covenant. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." He is a subtile enemy, and has his devices, by which to entrap unwary souls. So we may blame our unwatchfulness for this.

USE 1. This may serve for our conviction and humiliation. We may lament and be ashamed of this bias of our hearts, so ready to look back to our former lusts, and after vows to make inquiry. Alas! are we not already found guilty in this point. How quickly is our zeal gone against our father's house, &c.

USE 2. Beware of looking back, and of hankering desires after your father's house and former lusts. For motives, consider,

1. The evil of this, the retaining any kindness to your former lusts in your ignorance, will be very grievous to the Spirit of Christ, whom you call your Lord and Husband. And no wonder, will you love them that hate the Lord, will you retain kindness to the enemies of your Lord; will you embrace those that were the cause of his death, and long to return to these, to deliver you from which Christ has done and suffered so much.

2. It will mar your communion with Christ. If you grieve his Spirit, he will depart. If you do not leave off your adulterous glances to your idols, it will procure you his frowns instead of his smiles. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us. So much of our hearts as our lusts get, so much Christ loseth of them; and so much as we enjoy of them, so much we lose of the enjoyment of the Lord. Our loss, therefore, will be far greater than our gain.

3. It will keep you still unfixed and unstable in religion, so as you shall not make progress in it. They will never look to purpose to the house of their husband, nor duly take his interest to heart, that do not forget their father's house. A divided heart will never be hearty for the Lord.

4. It is very dishonourable to Christ. Is not this blessed match with the Son of God sufficient to compensate the loss of what you had in your father's house. Can any thing be more dishonourable, than that the soul should still be hankering to be away, as if they repented the bargain with the Lord of glory.

Lastly, It is the fountain of apostacy. They that are often looking away, will be fair to break away at length. The way of sin is

down the hill, from less to greater. This is the blowing of the coal, which in time may proceed to a consuming flame.

Doctrine 2. Those that are espoused to Christ, must forget their own people and their father's house. There are two points here: namely, *first*, the forgetting of our own people; and *secondly*, the forgetting of our father's house. I will speak to these in order. And in speaking, *first*, of forgetting our own people, I shall,

I. Shew who are our own people, whom we must forget.

II. In what respects we must forget them.

III. Why we must forget them. I am then,

I. To shew who are our own people, whom we must forget. In a word, it is the wicked world, "the children of disobedience, among whom, in time past, we had our conversation." When the soul comes to Christ, it must say as Ruth to Naomi, "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." When Christ calls a soul to himself, he calls it out of the world. The church is a congregation gathered out of, and separated from the world; though not in place, yet in respect of affection, which is the greatest separation. But to be more particular, a saint may know who are his own people, by taking a look of himself, as corrupt and carnal.

1. Then they are our own people, who are yet living in darkness, unacquainted with the corruption of their nature, and misery of it; strangers to the spirituality of the law of God; strangers to the majesty and holiness of God, their absolute need of Christ, and his preciousness and excellency. The saints may remember the day in which they lived in that same region of darkness, and knew not more of these things than they, and may hence conclude these are their own people. "Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light."

2. They who are living in the same way and manner that the spouse of Christ did before her espousals; they are their own people walking on in the way which they have left; Eph. ii. 2, 3. Are they following the course of the world? do they venture frankly over the hedge of God's laws? You may know, then, by your former conversation, that they are your own people, from amongst whom Christ plucked you, as brands out of the burning.

3. They who are going the same way your carnal hearts would go, if they were left to their own corrupt choice. These are your own people; for as in water face answers to face, so do your hearts, as corrupt, answer to theirs. It is grace only that makes the difference, for the same nature is in both, only the power of that corrupt

nature is broken in those that are espoused to Christ, but it is entire in others. There is another principle beside it in the godly, but it is alone, and sways all, in others.

4. They who are living in the same barren region, in which the saints lived, before their espousals to Christ. The state of nature is that barren region; that is a far country, far from God and his covenant, and therefore there is no communication betwixt God and them, no influences for making them fruitful in the works of holiness; but a fulness of these our grapes of wickedness. These are our own people: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy; hateful, and hating one another." We now proceed,

II. To shew in what respects we must forget them.

1. We must forsake their company; it is evil company, unbecoming Christ's spouse. "Forsake the foolish and live, and go in the way of understanding." While we are in the world, indeed, there is no shunning of evil men altogether; but you must not make wicked men your familiar friends, you must not choose their company; and if necessity lead you into their company, you must take heed to yourselves in it, and haste out of it as a plague house. They that are espoused to Christ, and yet keep wicked company as before, give no great evidence of their sincerity. Birds of a feather flock together, and you may know what a man is, by the company which he loves best.

2. We must not conform ourselves to them, nor be like them in their way. The command is, "be not conformed unto this world.' If we pretend a difference in our state from theirs, let there be a visible difference betwixt our way and theirs. Do Satan's drudges bear the devil's mark, let us hate to take it on, or learn of them their ways. All that have a mind for heaven, must be nonformists to the world, because the way of the world is against God and his law.

3. We must forget them in affection, saying, Depart from me, ye bloody men. Though we are to wish well to the persons of all men, we must hate their evil ways, saying with David, "I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave unto me." We must no more esteem their way as we were wont, nor desire to return into it. Have we been coming out of Sodom, we must not look back with a rueful look, otherwise we are not fit for the kingdom of God.

III. Why we must forget them.

1. Because they are not going our way. All men are on a journey to heaven, or to hell. There is a strait and narrow way that leads to heaven, a broad way to hell. If we are espoused to Christ,

then we are on the narrow way; and how can we but forsake them that are going the quite opposite way. Nothing is more opposite than the way of holiness, and the way of the world; therefore we must either give up pretences to Christ, or give up with the way of the world, "wherein in time past we walked according to the course of this world."

2. Because the godly and the wicked world are on two different sides, under two opposite heads, Christ and the devil. All the world is divided betwixt these two, the Saviour of the world, and the god of the world. Christ's party are his spouse, brethren, members of his body. The devil's are his captives, prisoners, slaves. And though these of Satan's party may come over, yet the truly godly will never mix with them in their ways. "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."

3. Because, in consenting to Christ, we give up with them. If you take me, let these go their way. Their company is infectious. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Their way is destructive, therefore let not your hearts go after them and their ways. When you engaged with Christ, you engaged against both, and said, "thy people shall be my people, and where thou goest I will go."

4. Because the world's friendship is enmity with God. James iv. 4. What is wicked company but a combination against God, to trample on his laws, dishonour his Son, and grieve his Spirit. What are the ways of the world, but a direct opposition to God. So far, then, as we go with them, so far we go away from God. So much as they and their ways get of our affections, so much we lose of affection to Christ.

Lastly, Because there will be a total separation at last of the godly and wicked, Matth. xxv. Grace begins it here. Grace gives a new nature, new principles, new designs, and new motives, all which make a new conversation, opposite to the way of the world. Therefore if we would not lodge with them in eternity, we must give up with them in time.

Use. Be exhorted then to forsake evil company, to stand at a distance from it, and conform not yourselves to the way of the world.

Motive 1. Consider how unaccountable it is, that Christ's sheep should be found among the devil's goats; and Christ's servants joining issue with the devil's slaves? 2 Cor. vi. 14—16. If you have given up your name to Christ, why are you found on the devil's ground. Let the swine of the world feed together on the husks of

sin, lie down together on the dunghill of their filthy lusts; but what has any to do among them that pretends to be a child of God.

2. The closer you are linked with them, the farther are you from God. Mix with the world and their way, and God will not know you as his. He commands a separation from these, if you would have a reception from him. "Wherefore," says he, "come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." Men must go to the one side or the other; there is no keeping up with both God and ungodly company. Will men be swearing a covenant with God one day, and swearing with profane swearers another; drinking at the Lord's table, and at the table of drunkards, 1 Cor. x. 21. God will never own such vagrants for members of his household. See their doom, Jude 13.

3. It hardens the wicked in their way. It is Solomon's observation, "they that forsake the law, praise the wicked; but such as keep the law contend with them." The sins of professors, going the way of evil men, is a practical testimony to the way of sin, emboldening the wicked to go on in their way. Whereas a testimony is to be kept up for God in the world, by a walk contrary to the way of the world. Thus Noah contended against the security and wickedness of the world, by a holy life, "by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

4. Evil company is an affecting plague. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." How many fair blossoms of religion have been killed in the bud, by the poisonous breath of evil company? How many have been dragged over the belly of good principles, vows, and resolutions, by the violence of it. There is a mighty efficacy in it to advance the devil's kingdom, and men being once drawn in, it is a thousand to one if they go not far beyond these bounds which they had prescribed to themselves. For the devil's agents have that off their master, let them once get in a finger, and they will endeavour to get the whole hand to follow.

Lastly, If you do not be separated, you will share with them. Weighty is that word, "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." How many have cursed the day that ever they saw the face of those by whom they have been first led into sin, and next to ruin. It will be no comfort to suffer God's wrath with company, whatever may be in sinning together. If we go in the way with the wicked, we must go to the same place with them. And though mercy should rescue you, it will be so as by fire, as we see in Lot's case.

Let all take this warning, and observe it in their occasional en-

counters, that they be on their guard, and likewise in their fixed communications, in all changes of our lot, choose good company; and when you see that you are inevitably connected with naughty companions, mark them, that you may avoid them as much as possible.

II. I proceed now to speak of the forgetting of our father's house. This father is our father the devil, who keeps house in a wicked world, and in every unregenerate heart. But we must give up with it, if ever we would see the house of our father in heaven. Here we shall,

I. Shew with what of our father's house we must give up.

1. You must part with the master of the house, Satan, and renounce your relation to the house. Though you have no express compact with him, you have need to do this. There is a twofold relation all natural men have to the house. They are servants of the house, hence it is said, ye were the servants of sin; their work is sin, and their wages is death. It is sad work, miserable wages; for he is the worst of masters, and they are the meanest sort of servants. Sinners have no term when they may leave their master, for they are slaves to Satan, and wholly in their master's power, taken captive by him at his will. He has a threefold title to them as his slaves. They are his slaves taken in war, "for of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought in bondage." The devil having proclaimed war against heaven, attacked man as heaven's ally and confederate, and gained the victory over him. He is pursuing this war still against mankind, and driving the unrenewed world before him as prisoners of war, and so at his will. Isa. xlix. 24, 25. They are also his bought slaves. Men, in general, like the Israelites, "have sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger." Where there is such a sale, Satan must needs be the buyer. It is a very low price, indeed, even for nought. The foolish sinner thinks not so, while he makes the bargain; but when the latter end comes, he will see it is all naught he has gained, in comparison of the soul that is lost. Rome drives this trade. Rev. xviii. 13. Where have they learned it, but from the devil, who early set it up, buying our first parents for a parcel of forbidden fruit, and had the impudence to order the second Adam to fall down and worship him. He is daily buying a drunkard for some strong drink, a covetous worldling for a little pelf, a hypocrite for a name, unjust persons and liars for a very little thing. They are also his born slaves, born in his house, Eph. ii. 3. Many are born of parents, slaves to the devil, themselves, all their days; even those who themselves are free, yet their children are

not therefore free too, for "they were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did their mothers conceive them." It is not the first birth, but the second, that will make us free men. Now we must give up that relation to the house. We must renounce our service, and break away from our old master, and betake ourselves to Christ, as a new master, who makes all his servants free men.

They are sons of the house. "Ye are of your father, the devil," said our Lord to the Jews. A sad sonship, for it is an ill house; it is to be a son of hell, a prison house, a dark house, a dreadful house. Never was a child liker a father, than unregenerate persons are like the devil. His nature is enmity against God and his law, so is theirs. He is fallen, and so are they; lying in wickedness, and so are they.

Now we must give up that relation to the house. We must be born again, we must be new creatures, or we will be ashamed of our pretended espousals to Christ. For if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." The image of Satan must be defaced, the image of God restored in sanctification, and that work advanced in daily mortification to sin, and living to righteousness.

2. You must quit the work of the house. We must cast off the works of darkness. There is never an idle person about our father's house. Satan keeps all his children and servants busy at their task, that so they may not think of ways to escape, or of leaving him, as Pharaoh did with the Israelites. And what are they always about that keeps them busy. They are always at one of two things, they are either weaving the spider's web, or hatching the cockatrice egg. "They are weaving the spider's web." They are very busy doing nothing. Nothing for God, their souls, or eternity. Their webs will not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works. All that they are busy about, will do no more to help their souls in the day of wrath, than a cobweb will clothe a man to defend him against the cold. The besom of death will sweep them and it away together; and about this heads and hands are employed. Or "they are hatching the cackatrice' eggs. He that eateth of their eggs dieth; and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. They weary themselves to commit iniquity. They draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and treasure up wrath against the day of wrath." This is work. It is hard, toilsome, and dark work, soul-ruining work. Yet it is the work of the house, in which each strives to outdo another, and undo themselves. But as in other houses some are employed in coarser work, and others in finer, so it is in this house. The master of the house puts his coarser

work in the hands of the profane, ignorant, earth worm, that has not so much as a form of godliness; and their task is "to fulfil the lusts of the flesh." He employs their tongues in swearing and lying, their bellies in gluttony and drunkenness, their bodies in uncleanness, their hands in picking and stealing; and their heads, hearts, hands continually about the world; so that on their belly they must go, and can never get up their head above the world, and their eye must never be satisfied with seeing, nor their ear with hearing, but like the grave, cry give, give; and loading themselves with thick clay, which they will never let go, till death separate them.

He puts his finer work in the hands of the hypocritical professors, who work such a coat to themselves, as they shine in it like angels of light, and their task is, "to fulfil the desires of the mind." He employs them to deceive the world with their hypocritical pretences to piety, and to deceive themselves also. Their business is to oppose themselves to the very heart and life of the gospel, by their unbelief, self-righteousness, pride, and self-conceit; and to keep in the life of some lusts by their form of religion, and shelter them under a cover of religious duties; to do much mischief to the church of God, and stumble and bring to ruin many poor souls.

Now you must quit the work of the house, of whatever sort it be. You must not be like those that will give over their master, engage with another, and yet come back, and fall to their work ag in. You must take other work in hand: I do not say more work, for as the watch that goes wrong, goes as fast as that which goes right, you will have as much work in your father's house as in your husband's.

3. You must part with the provision and entertainment of the house. People use to get their meat where they work their work, and Satan's slaves get their meat also in their father's house. And what is their entertainment? He sets them down "to eat dust with the serpent," Is. lxv. 25. He feeds them on filthy lusts, which may nourish their corruptions, but is poisonous to their souls. Satan did once eat angel's food in the enjoyment of God, but now dust is his meat with the serpent, that is, as it was the meat and drink of Christ to do the will of his Father, so it is Satan's to sin against God and to do mischief, all the pleasure he hath lies there. So it is with Christless sinners, the sweetest milk which they suck is out of the breasts of their lusts; the enjoyment of God was never so sweet to those whose god is their belly, as meat and drink; the dishonest person hath not so much pleasure in the gospel treasure, as in some thing that he can catch to please the covetous heart.

He sets them also "to eat husks with the swine," Luke xv. 16. He feeds them with the empty dry things of the world, and they are dressed up according as every one likes best. Some get the pleasures, others the profits, others the honours of it set before them, and on these they feed. So the voluptuous man has more delight in carnal pleasures than in communion with God; "for they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." The worldling hath more pleasure in his goods and chattels, than in all the spiritual gains of true godliness. These things are to him but shadows, but what he can hold is substance. "I am become rich," says he, "I have found me out substance." The ambitious man hath more delight in a name and honour among men, than in the honour of God's approbation. "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only."

Now you must quit the entertainment of the house, and betake yourself to the entertainment and provision of the house of heaven. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." You ask bread in your father's house, and he gives you a stone, for what he gives is not bread, and satisfies not the soul. The dust of lusts is not good, change your dust then, and "eat that which is good." God, grace, communion with God, and all the benefits of the covenant are good. They are good for the soul and the body, for time and eternity. The husks of the world have no fatness in them, change them therefore, and "let your souls delight themselves in fatness." Spiritual things are full of sap, and will make your souls prosper.

4. You must quit the fashions of the house. Every house hath its own fashions, and so hath your father's; but that must not keep them up. "Be not conformed unto this world." They are evil fashions, you are not to bring them along with you to your husband's house. The fashion of the house, in natural actions, is to follow these actions in a mere selfish way, to gratify a carnal appetite, without any eye to God in them, or fitting us thereby for his service. You must quit it, and must not be like your father's house in them. Modesty and sobriety, and referring all to the honour of God, is the fashion you must fall in with, as the fashion of your husband's house. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The fashion of your father's house, in civil actions, is to be sunk and swallowed up in these things, to be minding them more "than the one thing needful," and to have no respect to the command nor honour of God in

them; and so to make these things either justle out duty to God altogether, or to take such a lift of them, that no vigour of spirit, and sometimes even no strength of body, is left for duty to God. To be untender in these things, and even to give conscience a stretch, if a person can gain any profit or ease by it. To count truth in words, and exact uprightness in dealing, and to do no other way to others, than we would they should do to us, but needless nicety. If you quit not these fashions, you will never see the house of heaven. Luke x. 41, 42; 1 Cor. vi. 8, 9; 1 Thess. iv. 6. If ever men get more religion, they will get more moral honesty.

The fashion of your father's house in religious actions, (for there is some religion even in that house, but it is of the fashion of the house), that is to hold with the one half, and that too the worst half, the outer half, the mere form of godliness. To hold with bodily exercise, but endeavour not to worship God in spirit. So that men in that house shut the eyes of their bodies, yet their hearts are going after their covetousness; they bow their knees, but their hearts remain inflexible. It is their custom to seek to please themselves more than God, Matth. vi. 2. To go about these duties that they may sin the more freely, and so make a covering of them to some lust, Prov. vii. 14, 15. They put them in Christ's room, "going about to establish a righteousness of their own." If you quit not these fashions, you are not God's people, "for God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." "His people are the circumcision, who worship him in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Hypocrisy is a mask which God will pluck off.

5. You must quit the garb of the house. Under the Old Testament, when people were to make any solemn appearance before God, they were called to change their garments, Gen. xxxiv. 2. And if you would shew yourselves Christ's spouse, you must part with the garb of the house, off which you are come. You must part with the inner garment of the house, "that is the old man with his deeds." Ephes. iv. 22; Col. iii. 9. The old man is the corrupt evil nature; his deeds are the corrupt workings of that nature in heart and life. These cleave close to us, as a girdle to the loins of a man, but we must be putting them off by daily mortification. In vain do we pretend to be espoused to Christ, if we still retain our former lusts. Christ has another garment for his spouse, which we must put on, if ever we see heaven, that is "the new man," the new nature with a new life, Ephes. iv. 24. It is made up of two pieces: righteousness, the whole of our duty to man; and holiness, the whole of our duty to God. For true religion is universal, and therefore it is called a man; not a member or two of a man, but a whole man.

You must also part with the upper garment of the house, that is the filthy rags of your own righteousness, Is. lxiv. 6; Zech. iii. 4. The way in our father's house, is to cover their unrighteousness with their own righteousness, their evil with their good, their sins with their duties. But alas! all this is but a covering of rags, that will not hide thy shame before the Lord; a covering of filthy rags, that will make thee more vile. Christ hath provided the white raiment of his own righteousness for thee, that must be put on by faith; and all thou doest must be washed in the blood of the lamb, or thou wilt be ruined with it. You must learn that lesson in your husband's house, that never one could yet learn in their father's house, even to work in religion, as if you were to win heaven by working, and then to overlook all, as if you had done nothing.

Lastly, You must quit the interest of the house. People readily are concerned for the interest of the house of which they are members, and none more than the members of our father's, that do their utmost to support it. Now, if you mind for heaven, you must quit this interest, and pursue the interest of the house of heaven. You must not interest yourselves in the quarrels of that house. That house hath a quarrel against the image of God, the power of godliness, and the people of God, Gen. iii. 15; and all the members of the house interest themselves in the quarrel, one way or another, to bear down the exercise of godliness. Persecutors strike it down; mockers jest upon, and laugh at it; the worldly man gravely pronounces it to be folly; the hypocrite's heart rises bitterly against it, and bears it down and smothers it, with contention and strife about outward things. All join together in the quarrel, though they go different ways to work. But you must stand upon the side of godliness.

You must not support the interest of your father's house. Christ was sent to pull it down, "to destroy the works of the devil;" do not you put to your hand to hold it up. The members of the house are very much concerned to hold it up. They will not give their help to curb sin, but, upon the contrary, they encourage one another by example and otherwise, like Babel-builders, to go on with the work. Let none that mind for heaven, support the interest of Satan in the family, or in any place where they are. We now proceed,

II. To give reasons, why these that are espoused to Christ, must forget their father's house.

1. Because our father's house, and husband's house, are quite contrary the one to the other, as heaven and hell, light and darkness, and there is no reconciling them, 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. Therefore we must renounce our part in, and relation to the one, if we

mind to plead a part in, and relation to the other. They never shall mix. "God will preserve his people from this generation, for ever." They never can mix. "You cannot serve God and mammon." The heads of these houses are opposite, the work, the entertainment, the fashions, and interests; therefore, as you would not renounce your part in Christ, forget your father's house.

2. Because, as our husband's house is most honourable, so our father's house is most base. These that are espoused to Christ, as Christ is their husband, they are God's children; they are of the same family with the angels; nay, the very angels are ministering spirits, to take care of them who are joint heirs with Christ. They are honourable in their relations, and rich in their title to heaven and glory. But our father's house has nothing in it but baseness, for it is a fallen house, fallen from honour to the deepest disgrace, from happiness to extreme poverty and misery. For us to follow the ways of it, is as if one brought into a noble family could not forget, but bring along with her, the way of the beggarly family from which she came.

3. Because we will never apply ourselves to the way of our husband's house, if we forget not our father's house. While the hearts of the Israelites were set on the flesh pots of Egypt, they could make no progress in their journey to Canaan. Laban knew that Jacob could not enjoy his service, when he much longed after his father's house. The affectionate remembrance of the work and provision of our father's house will be a dead weight on those that have begun to run the race set before them; and always, the more we give way to our corruptions, the more tenderly we handle our lusts, religion will be the more difficult.

4. Because it is the worst of houses. No wonder, for the devil, the worst of masters, is the master of the house. No slavery like the service of that house. It is soul slavery. No entertainment like it, for it can never satisfy; nay, it is destructive to the soul. The work thereof is sin, the wages death, eternal death. The fashions of the house are the very reverse of all that is good. The interests of the house are the dishonour of God, the ruin of mankind. The garb of the house is filthy rags, and the shame of their nakedness will at length appear before the world.

Use 1. Of Information. It informs us,

1. In vain do we pretend to be espoused to Christ, if we do not reform our lives according to the rules of the gospel, but still hold on the old way, 2 Cor. v. 17. The old life, with a new profession and an engagement to be the Lord's, will make men but whited sepulchres; or like an old rotten wall new plastered, that will burst out fearfully, and go to ruin.

It is not enough to be like neighbour and other. It is but a sorry character. All the people of God must be nonconformists to, and dissenters from the world. The broad gate is room enough for multitudes, but they that will be at heaven, must be a singular sort of people, for they are men wondered at; content to take on them the hatred of their native country, and father's house.

USE. 2. It reproves those that will not forget their father's house, but cleave to it and to the way thereof. And who are these?

1. Those that, in the midst of gospel light, yet continue in the darkness of the house; even all grossly ignorant persons. They that are brought out of their father's house to Christ, are brought out of darkness to light, though they know not a letter. "They were sometimes darkness, but now are they light in the Lord." If people remain ignorant under gospel means, we know what is the cause, their father has put out their eyes. 2 Cor. iv. 8, 4. This will end in eternal darkness. "It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them, will shew them no favour."

2. Those that retain the language of the house. When Peter spoke, the damsel knew what countryman he was. "Thou art a Galilean, for thy speech bewrayeth thee." And what shall we say of thee, that art a curser, a swearer, a liar, a filthy speaker, but thou art a Hellilean. I appeal to your own consciences, what sort of language that is, whether it sounds like heaven or hell. To hear a man speak as if hell were opening; breathing out lies, as if inspired by the father of them; speaking, as if an unclean devil were speaking out of him; what can one think in such a case, but that the person speaks like the house to which he belongs. But if you will not forbear that language, it will turn to blaspheming at length through a long eternity. For the former is the language of the house in time, the other in eternity.

3. Those that wear the badge of the house on their breasts, the master of the house's mark on their foreheads, so that those who go by may easily know who they are. Profane people. You that will not bow a knee to God. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." You that take room to yourselves in all licentiousness, that have nothing to do with religion, but to shew aversion to all that is good; if not to mock and reproach others that seem to be religious. Will you pretend to any portion in Christ? No, no, you know not Christ, and he will disown you. A dumb devil possesseth you now, that you cannot, will not pray to God now; the day will come, that you will cry to the hills to fall upon you, and hide you from the face of the judge.

You will have a merry life of it now, but you shall weep; you will make a jest of religion now, but that will make you roar at length. Your heart is averse to all that is good now, the copestone will be put on it in hell. You care not for prayers, godly discourse, examinations, or sermons; but some of you will go to the hill with the beasts, Sabbath after Sabbath, and desire no person to take that task off your hand. Well were it for you, if, as you live with the beasts, you were to die with them also.

4. Those that give up themselves to the trade of the house, minding nothing but the world, earthly things. They have no trade with heaven. They know not what communion with God means. They will have their work on earth as far advanced as their neighbours, but their work for eternity is yet to begin. They are so busy they cannot get time for it. They have so much to do otherwise, they cannot get anything done to purpose for their perishing souls. That is folly, for the world will be consumed in flames, when that soul of yours shall continue to exist, to be either eternally happy or miserable, as it is now seen to be in time.

Lastly, Those that are the hidden servants of the house. It has been said of some, that they have stealed away to heaven, without being observed; but there are others that steal away to hell, and the world never hears the sound of their feet: even deep veiled hypocrites, whited sepulchres. "They are disobedient, deceiving, serving divers lusts and pleasures." They wear Christ's livery, but yet are Satan's drudges. There are always some lusts that have such persons absolutely under their power. The broad way is wide enough, so that they can easily get a bye path in it, to go by themselves to destruction, without mixing with the profane rabble that keep the highway. However, all come to one lodging at length. "As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."

Use of Exhortation. Be exhorted to forget your father's house. Leave the master of the house, the work, and the provision of the house. Renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and betake yourselves to Christ and his service.

Motive 1. Your father's house will remove, and it will be a sad removing. Our Lord's family will remove also, but it will be a happy removing. Christ hath a higher house in heaven, to which he will remove all the family he hath on earth. The devil hath a higher and a lower house also. His higher house is in this world, and it is a throng house; but the day is coming that his family will remove into the lower house, the bottomless pit, so as not one shall remain behind. There are some removing out of it daily, and

then the rest that remained behind are secure, but it will not be always so. There was a horrible cry at Dathan and Abiram's removing, Numb. xvi. 31—34; what a cry will there be when the family goes away together, and "shall all be cast into the lake of fire," which is their new house! Leave it then quickly, lest ye perish with it.

MOTIVE 2. It is highly reasonable, if you will have any part in Christ. You can have no part in him, but as espoused to him; and if espoused, then "you must leave your father and mother, and cleave to your husband." Did he not say to you in the offer made, If you take me, let these go their way. Will you come into this house, and not forget your father's house? Nay, if you do not, he will pursue you as he did Israel, like those who break wedlock. You have all professed your acceptance of the marriage covenant, all have had the seal of it in baptism, and some of you in the ordinance of the supper. Remember, then, you have lifted up your hands to the Lord, and cannot go back.

Lastly, Consider the motive in the following verse, "So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." From this you have several arguments, your leaving off these will truly beautify you in the sight of the Lord. Holiness is a beauty, it is soul beauty, a lasting beauty. Now, thus beautified, you shall be amiable and acceptable in the sight of thy Lord and Husband, and he will take pleasure in thee. He is a King worthy to be pleased, and his favour worthy to be sought. *Finally*, thou shalt be at no loss, whatever you part with for his sake. Communion and fellowship with him will make up all your losses. Amen.

May 1, 1712.

CHRIST JESUS DULY PRIZED.

SERMON XIII.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 8,

Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

THE apostle, in the preceding verse, having spoken of his privileges in his unconverted state, and told how meanly he thought of them

for Christ; doth in this go out with full sail, in running down all things whatsoever, in comparison of Christ. In the words. Consider how things weighed in his esteem. That which was of the greatest weight with him, and was absolutely highest in his esteem, was the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. That is the excellency of the practical knowledge of Christ, saving acquaintance with, and interest in him. Next what was downweighed by it, all things; not only his good works done in his unconverted state, but even these really good, done by the influence of the Holy Ghost. In a word, all things imaginable, without Christ, he counts loss; and in comparison of Christ. We have also his certainty in this matter. He was not in doubt about this reckoning, but with the utmost certainty was come to a point, "Yea, doubtless."

We have a remarkable evidence of a superlative esteem of Christ; namely, that whereas he had suffered the loss of all things for him, on a review thereof, he counted himself no loser, but fully made up, so as he might but win Christ. So much for a general view of the words. More particularly, before we enter on the matter of the text, we shall attend, *first*, to the apostle's manner; and, *secondly*, to his grand scope.

I. Let us consider the manner in which the apostle delivers himself upon this great subject. He speaks with openness, with the utmost certainty, and the greatest affection. I shall illustrate these three points in their order.

1. He openly professeth his esteem of Christ above all. He does not deliver this truth in the general, that Christ is to be preferred above all, but lays it out in his own experience, that they might see that he had good reason for what he said. This teaches us, that it becomes the saints openly and avowedly to profess their superlative esteem of Christ. It is not enough to have that esteem of him in the heart, but it should have a vent outwardly. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." This confession must be made for the glory of God. One great end of our regeneration and marriage with Christ is, that we may sound forth his praise in the world. "This people," says he, "have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise." If his heart has been opened to receive us, why should our mouths be shut to his praise. We have no more to render, but the calves of our lips. It serves also for the good of others, that they may fall in love with Christ. "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations, therefore shall the people praise thee for ever." The recommendations which the saints give to Christ have often a good effect. They say that the dropping of the lily

begets other lilies, so the saints beget others to Christ, by the dropping of their lives, which have an attractive virtue, 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. The drops of their blood are generative of saints. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Yea, the very droppings of their mouths for Christ are beneficial, Song vii. 9. It is then no part of religion for persons to keep their religion to themselves. There is much hypocritical profession; but we must not hide our love to Christ, if we have any, because of that. We must not be dumb in the cause of Christ and religion, because many give him fair words, and no more. Blessed is that professor, in whom Naphtali's blessing and Joseph's do meet, goodly words, and a fruitful bough.

Let the saints learn then to be more open mouthed for Christ. Let them commend him to others, and commend him from their own experience; first, to their fellow saints, saying, "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." O! should not Christ's friends be commending their friend one to another. This would be a most seasonable work at this day, in which religion is decaying; and if ever Christ comes again, to the spirits of his people in this land, this neglected work will be revived. O! it would be like a coal of fire, to set love to Christ in motion. Will two cold flints, striking one another, kindle a fire; how much more two, in which there is some fire. "How did our heart burn," said the disciples, "within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures."

Let them also commend him to strangers, Song v. 9—16. Drop a word for Christ to such, you know not what it may do. Many times a word forgotten by the speaker has been minded, with time and place, by the person to whom it was spoken in Christ's behalf, and has been like seed dropped, that has sprung up sweetly afterwards. O sirs! when we come to a death-bed, and ask ourselves what have we done, what have we spoken for Christ, we will have but a sorry reflection on it, if we do not exert ourselves more in that way than we are like to do.

Let us also speak in his cause and interest in the world. We should do that especially in those things that are opposed in our day; to be sure to hold by the truth of Christ, against all opposition, Mark viii. 38. If we esteem one highly, it is natural to take his part, and to do what we can to support his interest and honour; and if Christ have our hearts, he will get our endeavours that way also.

2. The apostle, in the text, expresseth himself with the utmost certainty, "yea, doubtless." He was not halting between two opinions, but goes with full sail, to determine in Christ's favours, upon the

competition of any thing whatsoever with him: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things," &c.

DOCTRINE. In matters of religion, we should labour to be doubtless. We should be at a point, fully resolved, at a full assurance.

This holds in these two things: *First*, In the truths of religion without us. *Secondly*, In the truth of religion within us. So Paul was doubtless in these two points. He did not doubt but he so counted and esteemed Christ above all. He as little doubted, but so counting, he counted right.

I. Then we should labour to be doubtless in the truths of religion, especially the main points of religion. "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." This is necessary,

1. Because, however doubts of these may be our affliction, yet they are our sin also. Satan may be the father of them, indeed; but it is a dark and unbelieving heart which is the womb in which these doubts are conceived, and by whose breasts they are nourished. It is the filthy mire of a corrupt heart, from which doubts as a thick mist do arise, to darken the light of the truth shining in the word of God.

2. Because these doubts are enemies to faith. It is true, doubting is not altogether inconsistent with faith; namely, with the existence of faith in the soul. May it not be said that true faith is the legs of the soul; doubts are the lameness of these legs, so that though the man may walk with them, yet he walks halting by them. And so far as they are opposite to faith, they are dishonourable to God, and impeach his truth. "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

3. Because they are the spring of apostacy and defection from the truth. They first set men a-wavering; they are carried about with every wind of doctrine; they were never truly rooted in the truth; and after they have gone hither and thither in their principles, at last they come, in a time of temptation, to fall off altogether.

Lastly, Because they are enemies to growth in religion. A floating head makes a barren life. Like a tree that never takes with the ground, but is always loose, it cannot bring forth fruit while it is so, Eph. iv. 14, 15.

Labour then to be at a point in the truths, especially the main truths of religion. And for this cause,

1. Study the word of truth, which is God's testimony to the truth. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no truth in them." The word of God is the only foundation of faith. You may take up things upon your own fancy, or the testimony of others, and then hold fast what you have so received. But that is not faith which is not founded on divine testimony. Hence many cannot be said to be doubtless, as to the foundation points of religion, because their belief of them is not founded on the testimony of the word of God having weight with their consciences, hence their belief of them is as a house built on sand.

2. Give up yourself to the teaching of the spirit of truth. Lay your souls down before the Lord, to be taught by his Spirit. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." When Peter said to Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus said unto him, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The Spirit of God teaches men experimentally, making them not only to see, but to feel the truth and its power upon their own hearts. He brings them "to obey from the heart that form of doctrine which is delivered unto them." Their souls are cast into the mould of it. And for this cause, there is need of much humility and self-denial, and a readiness to hear what the Lord will say. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."

Lastly, Walk in the truth. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." There is a certain harmony betwixt the truths of God, and a tendency in them to holiness of life; so as close walking with God inspires a man with a certain relish, by which he is enabled to discern betwixt truth and error; having his spiritual senses exercised, he judgeth of them, as the mouth tastes meat. We now proceed,

II. To shew that we should labour to be doubtless as to the truth of religion within us, as to the reality of grace, and not satisfy ourselves with a continued uncertainty in that point, whether Christ hath the chief room in our heart or not. We should seek after this certainty, with respect to our personal religion.

1. Because the saints may attain to it. It is promised. "He that hath my commandments," saith Jesus, "and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." It is commanded. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make

your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." Again, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Not only scripture saints, as David, Hezekiah, Thomas, Peter, Paul, but even many others of lower size have attained it.

2. Because doubts in this case are hurtful. Such doubts are like thistles among corn; though it is possibly not the worst ground on which they grow, yet they are hurtful weeds, and are to be plucked up. Doubts are injurious to God, and spoil him of his praise. They are injurious to the saints themselves, spoiling them of their comfort, strength, and confidence, which they might otherwise have, 2 Peter i. 10. A doubting Christian is always a weak Christian; therefore I will add,

Lastly, The case of our day calls for it. There is so little doubt of our being put to the trial, that we should now be labouring to be doubtless about it. For a doubting Christian is very unfit to act for Christ in a difficult time, and more unfit to suffer for Christ. When we have nothing in the world sure, we should endeavour to have our religion sure. Therefore in suffering or difficult times, the Lord useth to give this assurance to his people, as to Moses, Paul, &c.

Directions. 1. Labour to get out of an ill frame, if you would be doubtless as to your state. It is difficult for a man to know in what state he is, when asleep; so in the spiritual state of security, our evidences sleep with us; therefore, awake. Nor can a man judge of his state when in a faint; so in the spiritual faint of desertion, we are not fit to read our evidences, when the light of the Lord's countenance is gone out with us. Nor can a man judge of his state, when stunned with a sore fall: thus also spiritual falls, especially relapses, put a man out of his spiritual senses. As a man when he is in a thicket of thorns, so are men sometimes in temptations, they are no sooner out, than they are taken hold of again. Wrestle then to get out of entangling temptations.

2. Labour to have a close walk with God. "Herein," says Paul, "do I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offence towards God and toward men." This hath the promise of assurance. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God." Such a conversation makes conscience our friend, and cherisheth the Spirit, by which we are sealed. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

3. Attend carefully to the duty of self-examination. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownselves; know

ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." God has given us, in his word, marks of the soul's being in Christ, these we should apply.

Lastly, Cry much to God for his Spirit, to teach you to know the things that are freely given to you of God, and for his Spirit "to bear witness with your spirit, that you are his children."

Having thus seen the apostle openly professing his esteem of Christ above all, and expressing himself with the utmost certainty; we go on, *thirdly*, to observe that the apostle delievers himself here very affectionately, and with an enlarged heart. The more he speaks of Christ, he still riseth the higher. Some things he counted loss, but here all things; not only loss, but dung. Now,

This teacheth us, that the excellency of Christ is a subject that natively fires a gracious heart. It doth this,

1. Because all their hopes are in him. Whatever they have in hand, or in hope, of pardon, peace, joy, assurance, all is built on him as the foundation. "For they are dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory."

2. Because all their desires are in him. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." He is to them a satisfying portion, in whom they see enough to satisfy, and to give rest to their spirits.

Use 1. It is a sad sympton when people's spirits are not affected with the preaching of Christ. When people find their hearts touched and affected with the thunderings of the law, but remain unmoved with the still small voice of the gospel. When things relating to the public raise their spirits, and the preaching of Christ is tasteless to them, as the white of an egg; it is the sign either of a dead, or a distempered soul.

2. Let the saints then think, speak, and hear of Christ, as the best way to fire their coldrife hearts and affections. It is by him alone we partake of divine influences; and to his saints, "his name will ever be as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love him." The more the soul thinks on him, the more precious will he be in its eyes; for he is an object that will abide a look.

II. Let us consider the grand scope of the apostle in this verse. It is to shew the incomparable excellence of Christ. Every clause in the text breathes out this. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord."

Doctrine. Jesus Christ is an absolutely matchless one. He is a nonsuch. All sheaves must bow to his. The subject of the match-

less excellence of Christ, is a subject that can never be exhausted. I shall only drop a few things. There are three ways to prove the transcendent excellence of Christ.

I. By testimony.

II. By real evidence.

III. By comparison.

I. By testimony. Heaven and earth concur to bear witness to the transcendent excellence of Christ. He hath,

1. God's testimony. The Father declares him to be his delight, Isa. xlii. 1. He gave him to the world as the greatest demonstration of his love, John iii. 16. He declared by a voice from heaven, "that he is his Son, in whom he is well pleased;" not only with himself, but with sinners for his sake. This was done with great solemnity, "for lo! the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."

2. The testimony of angels. An angel brought the news of his birth, and an host of them sung for joy at the great event, Luke ii. 10—14. In another place, we find thousands of thousands of them, giving their testimony to him, in these words: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

3. The testimony of the saints in heaven, who have got a place among them that stand before the throne. This we may learn from that which is borrowed from their practice, to shew the exercise of the church militant. "They rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. They fall down before him that sitteth upon the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever." They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." Could we have access to them, they would give us that testimony of him which the queen of Sheba gave of Solomon. "Behold the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men; happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom."

4. The testimony of the saints on earth, who concur in this, that he is a matchless one. "Thou art fairer," say they, "than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." Says Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Says Solomon, "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it." But why should

we stand upon particulars, all have given a real testimony, in joining with Paul, in the text. They know him, and therefore their testimony is to be regarded.

5. His very enemies bear testimony to him. We hear them say, Never man spake like this man.

All that profess his name, give him that testimony, though, alas! many of them, indeed, prefer others to him.

II. By real evidence, whereof take these following:

1. He is God. "He is the true God, and eternal life;" therefore his excellence is infinite. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power." Angels and men, and all their works, are but created things, the workmanship of his hands. He is the Creator, the beginning: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

2. Christ is commensurate to the desires of the soul, which all creatures, conjunctly or severally, are not. All things besides him have the bounds of their goodness; one of them is good for one thing, another for another; none of them for all things. But there is an universal fitness in him, "for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." He is the storehouse, from which all the saints, from Adam, have derived the supply of their wants. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." What would we have, it is all in him.

3. Whatever excellency or perfection is in any thing else, it is derived from him. The most desirable creatures shine with light borrowed from him. There is no perfection in the creature, but what is eminently in himself, as the first cause. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

4. All things beside Christ cannot make a man happy; but the enjoyment of Christ alone can do it. There are two things wanting in all the creatures, that are to be found in him. These are, *First*, sufficiency; nothing can make one happy, but what is completely satisfactory; for if there be the least want, it mars happiness; now nothing besides Christ is such. In the most prosperous condition there is something wanting, as in paradise. Christ alone is completely satisfactory, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "He is all in all;" virtually all things. He is the heir of all, and they who have him, have all. *Secondly*, certainty; what is liable to change cannot make men happy; but all things beside Christ are so, Prov. xxiii. 5; but he is unchangeable, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." All fulness dwells in him; they that enjoy him need

fear no change; not in this life, "for he loves unto the end;" nor in the life to come, "for they shall be ever with the Lord." No change with respect to the subject, they shall never be taken from him, Rom. viii. 38; nor with respect to the object, he shall never be taken from them.

5. When no other thing can make help to a man, Psal. cxlii. 3, 4. Thus while the cisterns of created comforts run dry, the saints live in, and by him. Thus when David was spoiled of all, in Ziklag, "he encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Thus Habakkuk resolved, that whatever should befall him, "he would rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation." So when death comes, they have him "to be the strength of their hearts, and portion for ever."

Lastly, He can do for us what no other can do, procure for us pardon of sin, peace with God, a right to heaven, things which angels and men cannot do.

III. By comparison. No person, no thing is to be compared with him.

1. Men on earth; what are they, in comparison of Christ. Great men; they are all but his vassals, who is King of kings; they have but a borrowed glory. Wise men; their wisdom is but folly, in comparison of the wisdom of God. Good men; their goodness is nothing, in comparison of him.

2. Saints in heaven; what are they, but so many bright stars shining with light from the Sun of Righteousness, wonders of his mercy, and monuments of his love. They are like the lilies, wearing a glory for which they never toiled.

3. Angels are all servants. He is their head. When an angel was offered to go before the people, Moses was not content, but said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence."

4. The devils have great power: the god of this world. Christ hath the devils in a chain.

No things are to be compared with him, no affluence of worldly things. They are all of them greater in expectation than in enjoyment. All broken cisterns that soon run dry. All bitter sweets. All insufficient to satisfy the heart.

Even spiritual things are not to be compared to him. Grace and glory are his gifts; but the giver must be above the gift.

Use 1. They have a poor portion who are without Christ. They never can be happy.

2. They have made a good choice that have received Christ. Be their case what it will, they have no reason to complain; Christ is theirs. Though they have little in hand, they have much in hope.

3. We are to stand on nothing, so as we may gain Christ; and to be satisfied with nothing, if so we must lose him.

This subject reproves all the slighters of Christ. Such are profane persons, carnal worldlings, moralists, hypocrites however refined, and all such as undervalue the glory, honour, kingdom and interest of Christ in the world.

Let what hath been said commend Christ to us all.

ALL THINGS BUT LOSS FOR THE EXCELLENCY, &c.

I COME now particularly to the words. Here is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, held forth as before all things. What is meant by the knowledge of Christ? By the knowledge of Christ here, I understand a saving interest in, and enjoyment of Christ. So it is taken, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." So our Lord tells the foolish virgins, "I say unto you I know you not." They plead an interest in him, hereby he disowns them as none of his. And so "seeing of God," Matth. v. 8, and "seeing of the kingdom of God," John iii. 3, is put for an interest in, and enjoying of God. And so the text must be understood; for certainly it is not the notional, speculative knowledge of Christ, which Paul's adversaries here neglected not; but the saving, practical, experimental knowledge of him, as is evident from the context, ver. 9. This is that for which he throws away all things else, taking and desiring to have him instead of all. And this is called the knowledge of Christ,

Because Christ is a spiritual object; an object for the soul, and not for the senses; "whom, having not seen, we love." The soul must rise from sensible things and occupy itself in the contemplation of his perfections, uniting with him, so that the soul finds that sweetness in him that satiates it, so that the happiness of heaven consists in the seeing of God and of Christ, "whom we shall see as he is;" that is, the enjoying of them.

DOCTRINE 1. That only is the true knowledge of Christ which terminates in an interest in, and enjoyment of him. All other knowledge that comes short of this is unworthy of the name. As the least brook that is, however shallow, differs from the deepest standing pool, while it runs into the sea, and resteth not till it be there; so the least measure of saving knowledge differs from all the light a hypocrite hath, in that it terminates in an embracing of, and uniting with Christ, while the other stands idle and inefficacious in that matter. To confirm this, consider,

1. That all the knowledge of Christ which men have, that brings them not to him, is but splendid ignorance, according to the word.

Hence they are branded everywhère as fools; men whose hearts cannot be right, because their heads are not right; foolish builders, foolish virgins; they are blind also. Some persons can talk so as they are admired of the ignorant, but when knowing persons come to try their knowledge, they find they do not understand what they speak, nor whereof they affirm. So is it with those that have not the saving knowledge of Christ; their knowledge is but gilded ignorance.

2. That knowledge of Christ, which issues not in an interest in in him, is not so much knowledge, as mere opinion; which is dubious and uncertain. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Natural men, to speak properly, have not the knowledge of Christ, though they can preach him; but only an opinion, a good opinion of him, as men have of many points that are in controversy, in which they are far from an absolute certainty. They think well of Christ, but yet they will not commit themselves to him, because they are not sure. When you meet with a stranger at an inn when travelling, you find, perhaps, the man a very discreet person, and you form a good opinion of him, that he is a very honest man, and therefore you will converse with him a while; but yet you will not commit your money to him, because though you have a very good opinion of him, he is a stranger to you, you do not know him. Just so it is with those who have only a speculative knowledge of Christ. They do not know him so well as to put their trust in him. There are two points of saving knowledge, by which I may exemplify this.

1. The superlative worth and excellency of Christ. That he is more precious than all things else, as in the text; and that all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to him. Now, no doubt, each in this congregation would answer, if asked, that they know this. But mistake it not, there is a difference betwixt knowledge and opinion. As for most of us, it is but opinion, not knowledge, otherwise we would take him for, and instead of all, Matth. xiii. 45, 46. If one should offer a pearl to an ordinary merchant for all that he hath, his attention would be excited, his heart and eye would be in the pearl indeed, but he dare not venture on the bargain; for though he has some notion that perhaps that one pearl is better than all the goods he hath, yet he is not sure. But should a jeweller come and tell him, assuring him that it is worth double of all his ware, he would take it, and give up all his ware with heart and good will. Thus saith Jesus, "if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me

to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

2. Christ's sufficiency. That Christ is able to bear all the sinner's weight for time and eternity. That he is just such an high priest as became us. We all think we know this; and certainly the saints that have believed, and rolled all their weight upon him, have known it. They can say, each for himself, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." But really, to the most part, it goes no farther than a bare opinion, which never brings them to venture all freely upon him. They are like a man fallen into a deep pit, a rope is let down, he looks to it again and again, thinks it is strong enough; yet when he comes to try it, he starts back, cannot venture for he is not sure, and therefore falls a climbing up, till he fall and ruin himself. Now the true knowledge of Christ differs exceedingly from this opinion of him. Says Paul to the Thessalonians, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

3. The true knowledge of Christ engages the heart, and captivates the soul. "And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." When the gospel comes in power and demonstration of the Spirit, the heart of a sinner is overpowered, that as it cannot hinder itself to assent to clear truth, so it cannot but embrace him as the chief good. "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." As the loadstone draws iron to it, so there is a divine virtue in spiritual illumination, to draw the sinner to Christ. As some waters have a healing virtue coming through minerals, so Christ, riding in triumph in his glory through the soul, certainly gains the heart consent of those that behold him. So that that light, like the fire of the furnace, burns off the children's bonds wherewith they were held before.

4. The saving knowledge of Christ differs not in kind, but in degrees, from heaven's happiness. It is the commencement of eternal life in the soul, John xvii. 3, "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Here the knowledge of him is through a glass darkly, there face to face. As in heaven, then, there is a complete happiness and enjoyment of God, from that knowledge of him there; so there is a real interest and enjoyment of him here, in some, in which the knowledge of him here

doth issue. What did it avail the rich man, to see Abraham, and Lazarus in his bosom, afar off; this contributed to his torment. So what avails any knowledge of Christ, without an interest in him? As James says of faith without works, "Can faith save you?" So may we say of mere speculative knowledge, Can it save you?

Lastly, The true knowledge of Christ is not an idle speculation, but a practical experimental knowledge, ver. 9. It is to know him, that we may be partakers of him. Saving knowledge is transforming, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Men do not dig into the bowels of the earth to see gold, but to enjoy it; nor do they know the treasure in Christ, whose business it is not to make it their own.

Use 1. Of Information.

1. Many of those who want not knowledge of the truths of religion in some sort, may begin again to learn the A, B, C, of Christian knowledge. How many learned ignorants are there in the world, that know something of all things, but the one thing needful. This is a certain rule. A man has no more of Christ in his head, than he has of him in his heart. And if that be so truly, for as far as most of us are on, we may be brought back to the first question of grace's catechism, "What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?"

2. True knowledge carries a man out of himself to Christ, and so fills a man with humility and self-denial. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," says Job, "but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." That knowledge which puffeth up is none of the right sort, for were it of the right kind, it would, as a river, run into the sea of the excellency of Christ, and raise him, and empty and humble men's selves in their own eyes. No more knowledge of Christ have we, than we have of humility and self-denial. They to whom Christ is all, will themselves be nothing in their own eyes.

3. Surely Christ is a veiled beauty to those who are not interested in him. They that know him cannot but love and embrace him, they cannot refuse him. If Christ has not yet got thy heart, surely thine eyes are held, that thou canst not perceive him, Song v. 9—16, compare chap. vi. 1. Thou couldst not prefer any thing to him, if thou didst but behold his glory, therefore thou knowest no more of him than he has of thy heart.

4. In whatever measure any thing besides Christ carries away the heart, the knowledge of Christ is so far lost. The heart of man is an empty thing that must needs be seeking satisfaction in the enjoyment of something. If thy heart be inordinately going out after the enjoyment of the creatures, it is an evidence that it has so

far lost the knowledge of his excellence; so far as that is gone, so far hast thou lost the true knowledge of him. And, therefore, for recovery, turn the eyes of thy mind towards him to behold his glory, which is the readiest way to darken created excellence.

Lastly, The best way to obtain true knowledge of Christ, is to be much in seeking and conversing with him, that is the way to enjoy him. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Practical religion is the best way to attain to more of the knowledge of Christ. As those with whom we would be acquainted, we must be much in their company, and converse with them frequently; so this is the way in which Christians get the secrets of the covenant manifested to them.

Use 2. Let me exhort you to labour to know Christ, and to improve your knowledge of him to an interest in, and enjoyment of him; and never satisfy yourselves with a knowledge of him that comes short of that. Never reckon you know more than you enjoy and feel in your souls of Christ, or than you really, in believing, make use of, and improve for your souls. Consider,

1. Such knowledge is very useless to you, whatever it may be to others, for whom God can serve himself of it, to lead them in the way of truth. What would it avail a man to know the remedy, while he neglects to apply it; would not such an one die of his disease. Sinners, what will it avail you, that you know Christ is a Saviour, if you do not employ him? What the better is a man, that he dies within sight of the physician? What would it avail if a man had ever so much knowledge of the law, if yet he suffer men to wheedle him out of his estate, while he neglects to plead his right? And what though you know what to do to be saved, if you do it not? What the better are you to know Christ to be an up-making portion, if you take him not for your portion?

2. Nay, such knowledge is noxious. It doth for the present aggravate your sin. Sins against light, are of all sins the most heavy. For the future, it will aggravate your condemnation. Alas! what is that knowledge, that serves only as a lantern to light men into everlasting darkness?

3. Our disease lies more in our hearts than in our heads. There was some knowledge left after the fall, Rom. ii. 15; but there was no goodness, no heart holiness. If physic be taken, yet if it do not operate to carry off the ill humours of the body, a person is nothing the better, but rather the worse; so is it when knowledge comes

into the head, but sinks not into the heart. Men's minds should usher in the truth received, into the heart; but instead of that, they are often as jailors, to lock it up in prison that it cannot stir, "They hold the truth in unrighteousness."

Lastly, God will not own his knowing of any, but those in whom he has a special interest, Matth. xxv. 12. And if ye would reckon as God will do, you would reckon thus also.

Use 3. Of comfort to those that have seen as much of Christ, as that they cannot rest without an interest in him; and have some enjoyment of him, but may be discouraged under a sense of weakness of knowledge. But be comforted, it is true knowledge. And as a little gold is far more precious than much brass, so the lowest degree of true knowledge is far better than great stores of mere speculative knowledge.

Doctrine II. All things are but loss in comparison of an interest in Christ, and the enjoyment of him. This is a point that runs counter to the judgment of all the unregenerate world, who count highly of other things, but make light of Christ and an interest in him. This is confirmed by the daily practice of all out of Christ. Here I shall,

I. Shew in what respects all things are but loss in comparison of an interest in Christ, and the enjoyment of him.

II. I shall confirm this point by proofs and illustrations. I am then,

I. To show in what respects all things are but loss, in comparison of an interest in Christ, and the enjoyment of him.

1. There is not one thing in all the creation, but it is loss, in comparison of the enjoyment of Christ as ours. Turn over all the creatures, and all created perfections in the world, single out the best of them, and the most desirable, take the choicest, it will be but refuse in comparison of Christ.

2. All of them together, are but loss in this respect. Suppose you were possessed of the whole inventory of good things; profitable pleasant things, lawful and unlawful, that what is wanting in one, may be made up to you in another; lay the possession of them in one balance, and the enjoyment of Christ in another, they would all be weighed down. If the whole constellation of created perfections should arise upon you, Christ, as the Sun of Righteousness, would darken them all. Had you Solomon's riches and wisdom, Samson's strength, Absalom's beauty; should all the created comforts ever man had, or ever will have, fall down together into your bosom, all would be nothing in comparison of an interest in Christ, and the enjoyment of him. All is but loss. All are of no value in

comparison of an interest in Christ. The best of them are not worthy to be named with him in one day. Health and strength are good, and outward accommodations and privileges are good, but as the glorious stars hide their heads when the sun appears, so must all these things before Christ. They are all to be thrown away, when we cannot have Christ with them. If it comes to that, that we must part with Christ or part with them, then we have reason to say, farewell profits, pleasures, honours, liberty, life itself, and all things, and welcome Christ. They are to be lost in that case, but in no case must we agree to lose him. The man is at no loss that loseth them, but gains Christ. He loseth but loss, which no man will grudge. He is sufficiently made up in the want of them all, by the enjoyment of Christ.

Finally, He has a poor bargain of it, that has all, but wants Christ. His gain may be soon told, his loss cannot be reckoned up. We now proceed,

II. To confirm this point by proofs and illustrations. O to believe it! The belief of it would turn the current of our desires and endeavours another way.

1. An interest in Christ makes God ours, for he is God; "the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him." So runs the covenant, in which God makes over himself, in Christ, to sinners: "I will," says he, "be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." He is their portion and their heritage. They are children and heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Now what is all the world in comparison of God himself? While others can say, this land, this house is mine, the Christian can say, God is mine, for Christ is mine: "Lo this God is our God." An interest in Christ, then, is absolutely the greatest treasure. Men nor angels cannot make an inventory of the Christian's portion, which is summed up in this, God is theirs. The greatest abundance of earthly things may be reckoned, and you will soon hear that there is no more. "But eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The infinite perfections of God are their treasure, and this treasure will tell out to all eternity. It is also absolutely the most valuable treasure, for what proportion can there be betwixt the perfections of God, and those of the creature. Worldly men may have some streams of good things let out to them, but the Christian has the fountain of all. Now, where the water is good, it is best in the spring. Sure then the enjoyment of God must be best. God's goodness, love, and all-sufficiency is theirs.

2. An interest in Christ is the one thing necessary. "One thing"

says our Lord, "is needful." All things must go for necessaries. A man parts with his money and goods for his health, and will part with all for his life. He reckons all nothing in comparison of that, because he can live without other things, but none of these things can avail him, if he lose his life, Matth. vi. 25. Even so an interest in Christ stands by itself, and is not to be reckoned among, but above all things else.

Other things are conveniencies to be thankfully received, but not necessaries that cannot be wanted. Man's great desire is to be happy. This is the end which all propose to themselves. Now, I say, other things besides Christ are not absolutely necessary for this end. It is not necessary that you may be rich, you may be happy without riches. Lazarus was happy, though poor; the apostles, though despised, and counted as the off-scouring of all; Job, without either health or wealth; the saints in heaven are stripped of the comforts of this life, yet perfectly happy; therefore happiness may be without them.

But an interest in Christ is absolutely necessary. No happiness without it. Though you were compassed about with all the profits and pleasures of the world, yet in this case the sword of vengeance hangs above thy head. Thou art but as a condemned malefactor set down at a well covered table, but knoweth not how soon he may be raised and led to execution. Though the earth smiles on thee, yet heaven frowns; though men bless, God curseth thee, and may say to thee, "thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

Again, nothing can make up the want of an interest in Christ; but an interest in him can make up the want of all things else. All the gold of the Indies will not buy a pardon, nor the greatest earthly honours keep from everlasting contempt. Have what you will, if you have not Christ, you are under a loss that cannot be made up another way; but that makes up all other wants, Philip. iv. 18. Whatever you want, if Christ be yours, you have what is better.

Finally, Every thing that one really needs is comprehended in it, so that the way to get all our needs compendiously answered, is to get an interest in Christ. Our wants are far more than our needs. We reckon our needs more than they are; but once in Christ, then one may well expect to get all he really needs made out to him. "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." "For the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Whatever his people need, God, as a Father, will provide for them," Matth. vi. 32.

3. An interest in Christ is satisfying to the soul, while nothing else can give satisfaction. You may as soon grasp your arms full of dreams, and embrace your own shadow, as suck satisfaction out of the dry breasts of the creatures. But in Christ there is what will satisfy the soul, answer its desires in breadth and length. There are two things necessary to give satisfaction. *First*, Suitableness. Now Christ is a suitable enjoyment for the soul. He is suitable to the nature of the soul, which is spiritual, and the enjoyment of him is the enjoyment of spiritual blessings. "God blesses us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The soul is immortal, and so an interest in Christ is durable; "for durable riches and righteousness are with him." He is suitable to the necessities of the soul, for pardon, peace, and every blessing; whereas all things of the world are nothing so.

Again, fulness is necessary to satisfaction. Now there is a fulness of these suitable blessings in him. "It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." What can be wanting in an infinite good. Here then "we eat that which is good, and our souls delight themselves in fatness."

4. An interest in Christ is the most enriching interest. Were an estimate to be made of what the meanest Christian is worth, and what the richest monarch, the Christian's would be found infinitely beyond his. The Christian has a right to more, for he hath a right to all through Christ. "All things," says Paul to believers, "are yours." The Christian has married the heir of all things, and so may set his name on all that is his. What though he hath but little in hand, yet look his papers, read his charter, his bonds under the hand of God himself, containing the promises of this life and that which is to come, and the greatest riches of the graceless world, is rank poverty in comparison of that.

Nay, the Christian hath more in actual possession than the greatest on earth. The most precious and valuable riches are ordinarily least in bulk. A little gold, or a small pearl, is more valuable than a bag full of brass coin. Reckon thus, and the man that is interested in Christ hath more in hand than the richest in the world. His grace is more precious than gold, his power over his own spirit better than dominion over kingdoms. What is so great on earth as a kingdom? What kingdom so great as that of heaven? The Christian has it: "For behold the kingdom of God is within you." And this leads us to observe, that the Christian, by his interest in Christ, hath all within himself, that he needs not go out for it. You will say such a man has a well furnished house and table, some things he got from such a place, and some things from

another. O! but, say you, there is another man hath all things within himself, the last is preferable. So in this. What an ungodly man doth most value, generally it is without himself. His riches are in his coffers, his plenty in his barns, his dominion is given him by others, and can be taken away; his honour also depends on others. But the Christian hath all within himself, because Christ is in him. Yes, "Christ is in him, the hope of glory." "A good man," it is said, "shall be satisfied from himself." Christians "know in themselves, that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." He hath a kingdom within, that contains what is suitable for every case.

Here, also, I would remark, that the little that one hath, that hath an interest in Christ, is more valuable than the greatest abundance of a Christless man. "A little," saith the Psalmist, "that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked." Better than the riches, even than the riches of many. But how can that be? I answer, the little they have, they have it with the love of God; and whatever others have, they have it with his wrath and anger. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just." What the Christian hath, comes from God's love, and is a token of his love; and you know tokens are valued more for the sake of the giver, than the gift itself.

Again, the Christian hath the sanctified use of what he possesses. All that they have comes to them through the channel of the covenant, and tends to their good. "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," whereas others, by virtue of a secret curse that is in what they have, are thereby injured. There is death in the pot. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Many have been nourished and supported with coarse fare, when kings and emperors have had poison mixed with their most delicious meats. So it is here.

Besides, the little that the Christian hath, he hath it freely, nothing to pay. It is paid for already by the blood of Christ. But others will have a dear reckoning that will pay for all at the latter end. They may write on all their enjoyments this motto, The price of blood. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The world is as a commodious inn, perhaps the children there do not fare so well as the stranger. But then the stranger gets his bill ere he go away, when he must pay dear for all he hath got.

The Christian, also, hath a far better right to his little, than the other hath to his abundance. A covenant right, it is the purchase of Christ. It was precious water that was brought to David, out of the well of Bethlehem, more precious than wine, because it was the price of blood.

Others have but a right by common providence. Their good things are bones cast to dogs. It is but as a supper which a malefactor enjoys before he is led forth to execution.

Lastly, The little which the Christian hath, is an earnest of more mercy. You may call it Joseph, for God will add another to it. Now, a little given as an earnest, is better by far than a great sum, after which no more is to be expected. Even the Christian's wants are better than the abundance of others, even as the want of strong liquor is better than to have it to put us in a fever.

5. An interest in Christ is the only abiding, lasting interest. It will abide when we must lose all other things. We see that a little thing coming in yearly, is preferred to great sums in hand, which may soon be all spent. An interest in Christ cannot be taken from us as other things may, Matth. vi. 19. The philosopher called riches the vomit of fortune; if so, we find the vomit is often resumed. Job in his time saw himself rich and poor to a proverb, Prov. xxiii. 5. But once in Christ, always in him. The landed man may have his crop destroyed, but his land abides. Other things are lent us, but this is an irrevocable gift.

We cannot be taken from it, Matth. vi. 20. The man that dies interested in Christ is his own heir, and carries his interest into another world with him. The worldly comforts men have, are like servants in an inn, that wait upon persons while they continue there, but go not away with them, but abide to serve others that come after them.

Lastly, I shall prove it by an induction of particulars upon which men set their hearts more than upon Christ.

1. Knowledge of other things besides Christ, is no way comparable to the knowledge of Christ. The pleasure which men find in it, is infinitely below that which they find in the knowledge of Christ. It can do no good at death, and they will have no more use for it through eternity, while the other will continue as the saint's eternal happiness. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." They are like men going through a city, gazing at every thing about them, while they never look to their own way, and neglect their own business. Each of them may say with Grotius, Ah! I have destroyed life, laboriously doing nothing.

2. Riches are vain, and, laid in the balance with an interest in Christ, are lighter than vanity. They are uncertain as the wind, and can never fill the heart, Prov. xxiii. 5. Nay, they enlarge the desires, where grace does not narrow them; for worldliness is a sort of spiritual drunkenness, that the more one gets, the more he would have.

They cannot profit in the day of wrath. It is with Christians and others, as with Abraham's children. Abraham gave all that "he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, he gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son." Christians are with the first, they are heirs; others get but moveables, and they are made over to them with the burden of danger, for saith Jesus, "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." There is danger in an evil time from men by them. The tall oaks are torn up by the roots, while the low shrubs escape; and they are at all times, but especially in evil times, a snare to the soul. They are a handle by which Satan holds men; so that while they cleave to them, Satan draws them to himself. They have also a burden of duties. God requires more of rich persons than of others. "To whom much is given, from them much shall be required." They have accounts to give. They are but stewards, and the more they have among their hands, their accounts will be the greater, Luke xvi. But an interest in Christ shall never be lost.

3. Honour and reputation. What vain things are they, depending upon the uncertain thoughts of others; and where men have them at many hands, they may be wanting at that hand where they might do them most good. How easily is reputation stained, and it is at the mercy of every calumnious detractor. It is a windy bubble of water that has no solidity in it, and quickly is gone. But he that has an interest in Christ, though he should lie among the pots while he lives here, shall shine in that honour which is eternal, hereafter.

4. An easy and pleasant life in the world is a vain thing, much desired and pursued, to the neglect of an interest in Christ. But let us do our utmost to make our bed soft here, there shall ever be found some thorn of uneasiness in it. No sound ease but in Christ. When world's ease is got, it bears hard on the soul, which as readily corrupts; while troubles in the world set men to their duty. And how suddenly is men's ease and pleasure interrupted; and the more they had of it, they can the worse bear the want of it.

5. Friends able to do one a kindness are much valued. They that have them, value themselves upon them; they that want them, think they would be well if they had them. But alas! how oft do

they prove like brooks dried up, Job vi. 15; and how quickly may we be in such a case, that if even our best friends were never so willing, they are utterly unable to help us. Christ is a friend that can, and will help in all cases.

6. Comfortable relations; a husband, wife, or children, dutiful and comfortable. Great mercies indeed, but loss in comparison of an interest in Christ. How difficult is it for us to have them such and not make gods of them? How difficult to rejoice, and not overjoy in them? And many times where people have thought to find their greatest comfort, there they have found their greatest cross. And however comfortable, yet they must part; and when they go, the more comfortable they were, the deeper is the wound they leave behind them.

7. Liberty is what every person prizes; there is always no man who would not rather choose to be stripped of all, and to wander to find her for himself, than to be penned up in a palace. But what serves that liberty, while a man is still in the devil's chain, and has the eternal prison abiding him; that though he can go where he will, yet he can go no where but where Satan is with him, and in him. How much more worthy is an interest in Christ. Though the body be imprisoned, confined, or banished, yet the soul has access at all times to the throne of God.

8. Life is dearer than all these, yet is but loss in comparison of an interest in Christ. What a vain thing is the life of man on earth, liable to a thousand accidents, and which even a blast of infected air can take away. The lamp goes out at length, the oil being wasted; and while it remains, may be clogged with such miseries as may make life itself a burden, and men to court their dissolution, that they may rest in a grave. To none of these is an interest in Christ liable, it is that which secures an eternal life.

Lastly, In a word, self is what most men seek, neglecting Christ. But what a vain thing are we ourselves. It will not be amiss to give here some self-debasing considerations. Consider, then, we are nothing. Whatever figure we make, we are nothing; that is to say, we are worth nothing. However great, we are but fair nothings. I Am, is God's name. Take away the parts of a compound, and then it is nothing. Let God take back his own from us, and we are nothing. You will see some men make a great appearance, and you think they are rich men; but others that know their affairs will tell you that they are worth nothing, for it is all other people's property that they have among their hands; and that if every one had their own, they would be brought to nothing. "Without me," saith Jesus, "ye can do nothing." We are but mere tools in the Lord's

hands: without him we can do nothing in grace or nature. As our being is from him, so is our working. Again, we deserve nothing. We are unprofitable servants. Our demerit is great, our merit nothing. We deserve hell indeed, but deserve not the least mercy. Yea, we are worse than nothing, as being sinful creatures, even as a cup full of poison is worse than an empty cup.

Use 1. Of information.

1. How foolish are men, then, who are very busy and diligent to get other things, but who neglect to get an interest in Christ. Like Martha, they are careful and troubled about many things, while they neglect the one thing needful, the better part. With what carefulness do men manage their business for their bodies, who are careless of their souls. Surely this interest is the great project we should be driving in the world, and not be seeking after that which is lost, to the neglecting of the great gain.

2. They have made but a poor purchase, have what they will, that have not an interest in Christ. Can they be happy, though they were monarchs of the world? They cannot, for their all is but a heap of loss and dung, they have nothing substantial and durable. Have what you will, what will all these things avail you, if you have not Christ.

3. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour. The poorest saint on earth is richer than the greatest man on earth that is a Christless man. He hath that which is of more worth than all the world. O! but fretting and discontentment ill becomes a Christian for want of any worldly thing. Does not Jesus say, Am I not better to thee than ten sons. Surely it is because they see not their stock.

4. Men are no losers, lose what they will for Christ. We have no reason to grudge to suffer the loss of all for him.

Use 2. Of exhortation. I exhort you then to seek and secure an interest in Christ for yourselves. Make this your great business. I have often called you to this, and it has been the great scope of all my preaching among you to lead you to Christ. And now when the Lord is threatening to draw our table, and separate ministers from their flocks, I desire once more to call and invite you to an interest in Christ. And if I could prevail, though I should never more have access to serve you in the gospel, I would think I had got my errand.

Motive 1. Christ is willing to receive you. There is a match proposed betwixt the King of Glory and the daughter of Zion, Christ and sinners. And I declare there is nothing to hinder it on Heaven's part. "For the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let

him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Young sinners, that are setting out in the world, he is content to be yours. "I love them that love me," says he, "and they that seek me early shall find me." Old sinners, he is content to be yours, though you have refused many calls. He excludes none of you, do not, I beseech you, exclude yourselves. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." And to evidence his willingness to be yours, consider,

Why did he come the long journey from heaven to earth, but to relieve the captive daughter of Zion. Are you the lost, Luke xix. 10. Why did he leave the Father's bosom, but to bring these back to it, whom sin had shaken out. Why suffered he, but that they might be saved? Why was he bruised, but that he might become bread to the hungry soul? Why shed he his blood, but to remove the lawful impediments of this match?

In vain did he shed his blood, if sinners amongst men be not partakers of it. Whom had he in his eye for reconciliation? Not angels, not devils, Heb. ii. 6. It was men, "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." Not to the righteous, there were none such; and if there had been, they had not needed him. Answer to your name then, O sinners! for such Christ came to call; he really offers himself to you in his word preached by his ambassadors. How then can you doubt his willingness. Our offer is really, though ministerial, Christ's own offer, for we have his commission to bear us out in it. Our commission and office we had not from the magistrate, therefore it is not in their power to deprive us of it, as they may deprive men of offices civil and military, which come from them. But our commission is from Christ. We teach not but what Christ has commanded us, and therefore he will be with us in it; which these have no ground to pretend to, that teach for doctrines the commandments of men, whom this Church is in hazard of having thrust in upon her; 2 Cor. v. 20. We are proxies for the Lord of Glory, come to you with his own word, by his orders. Would you have himself leave his glory a second time, to offer himself to you? Or would you have him come in his glory. You know not what you ask. It would become you better to do, as 1 Sam. xxv. 40, 41.

Our offer of him in his own name, is so really his, that you will be eternally ruined, if you refuse it, Mark xvi. 15, 16; John xvii. 20.

Consider, also, how long he has waited upon you, and after many refusals has still, and is courting your consent, Rev. iii. 20. Why did he not go away at your first or second refusal? No, but you have still line upon line. *Finally*, he knows very well what is in you and about you; yet hath he declared, that nothing shall hinder the match, if you be willing. Though you be poor and miserable, he is willing to take you, to enrich you, to clothe you, and nourish you for ever; and is he not then willing to be yours.

MOTIVE 2. Consider what you are without him. Wretched and miserable is the state of every Christless soul. If you saw your case by the light of the Spirit, you would be much affected. Let us glance at a few parts of your picture, as it is presented in the glass of the word. Sinner, thou art God's enemy. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Thou camest into the world in a state of enmity against God. The reconciliation is not yet made up, for there is no peace with God, but through Christ. Hast thou no interest in Christ, then what hast thou to do with peace, who hast nothing to do with the great peacemaker. There is wrath in God's heart, in his word, and in his hand against thee.

Again thou art debtor to justice. Sin is thy debt, which thou art not, and never will be able to pay. Thou art in the hand of an inexorable creditor. Thou hast no cautioner to be surety for thy debt. Thou wilt not get thy debt denied. Conscience will be instead of a thousand witnesses against thee. Thou wilt be pursued for principal and interest, and the debt will be pursued at thy own expense. Thou art also the law's criminal. God hath a law, and by that law thou must die. "For the wages of sin is death." The law condemns thee, takes away thy life as a traitor to God, an enemy to heaven. Thou livest but as a malefactor, by the benefit of a reprieve, and thou knowest not how soon it may expire.

Thou art, moreover, Satan's slave, captive, and prisoner. Thou art under "the power of Satan, and taken captive by him at his will." In this case Christ finds all those to whom he comes. Behold thy drudgery work, the sign of thy slavery, thy chains, thy captivity, thy prison garments that are on thee.

Thou, O sinner! in thy Christless state, art to every good work reprobate. Thou canst do nothing good or acceptable in the sight of God. Thy prayers are but howling, thy sacrifice an abomination, thy throat an open sepulchre.

Besides, in thy Christless state, sinner, thou art a stranger to the covenant of grace, and all the benefits of it, Eph. ii. 12. Thou hast not married the heir, and, therefore, what hast thou to do with the benefits of the contract. Thou canst have no pardon nor peace in your present state.

Thou art a burden to the earth, Rom. viii. 22. Every creature is thine enemy. The very meat which thou eatest, waits a command to dispatch thee. Thou art an abomination to heaven, that will have nothing to do with thee. "For there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Thou art a prey to the pit's devouring mouth that waiteth for thee.

Motive 3. An interest in Christ is the best interest which you can have in the world. Consider that it is an interest for soul and body both. A man's purchase in the world, may furnish him something in the world for his body, food and raiment, and the like; but nothing for the soul. This will furnish you peace, pardon, and all the benefits of the everlasting covenant. Yea, and for the body, it makes it a member of Christ, a temple for the Spirit, and ensures a glorious resurrection. It is an interest both for heaven and earth. It makes them to inherit the earth, Matth. v. 5, by their right to it in Christ, and their contentment with what they have of it, as if they had it all, and this interest entitles them to glory. It is then both for time and eternity. "It is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come." It is the best security for a through-bearing here, and will be an interest of which you will reap the fruits for ever.

Motive 4. Consider the case of the day in which we live, calls loudly for us to secure our own interest in Christ. And we can make no good use of the reelings of the times, if they do not lead us to this. Have we not need of something which men cannot take from us? And what is that, but an interest in Christ, with the benefits depending thereon? We are threatened with persecution and with the sword, in which the Church and land were once involved, what in such a case have men they can call their own? Have we not need of something that may be comfortable to us, under the loss of all things? Indeed, the man that hath an interest in Christ may say, I have a refuge, a portion.

If you be called to suffering, what a sad thing is it to suffer for one in whom you have no interest. You will be ready to turn your back upon him; and yet, shunning suffering for a good cause, you may be brought to suffer dishonourably, whether you will or not, so as sinning will not keep you from suffering.

When snares are abroad, and a course of defection, how can you think to escape that have no interest in Christ? And when the Lord is threatening to remove the gospel from you, it calls you at length to answer his call.

Motive 5, and *last*. Let the consideration of eternity stir you up.

What will you do without an interest in Christ, when death arrests you? The soul and body must part. Who will keep you from the second death? When time is gone, thou must pass to eternity.

What will you do when the resurrection comes? What hill or mountain will cover the sinner from the face of the Lamb?

When, O sinner! thou must stand before the tribunal, and that very Saviour whom thou now slightest will be thy Judge, who will then plead thy cause?

Directions. View your sinfulness. Get a deep sight of your misery without Christ, your utter inability to help yourselves, and the helplessness of all creatures. Give away yourselves solemnly to Christ, and all that is yours, taking him for, and instead of all. Amen.

[Same subject continued.]

SERMON XIV.

Philippians iii. 8,

My Lord.

Here the apostle asserts his interest in Christ, calling him his Lord; not only as Christ had an interest in him and lordship over him, but in so far as he had an interest in Christ. "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

Doctrine. Saints may, and ought to plead an interest in Christ as their Lord. The Lord's people sometimes fall into the hands of strange lords, who are hard lords to them. But in the worst of times a child of God may tell a fivefold tale of Christ, which their graceless enemies cannot. Every saint may say of Christ,

1. He is my Lord God. For as low as his work and cause are, the believer's Lord is God, and his God, John xx. 28. "The fulness of the Godhead dwells in him." "He is God manifested in the flesh." Now an interest in God as our God, is an interest above expression. His infinite wisdom is theirs to direct, his power to protect them. "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Why then should they be afraid of men, however severe masters they be?

2. My Lord, proprietor, master and owner. We and all ours are the Lord's, therefore he may dispose of us as he will, and we are to

submit. In the day of the soul's closing with Christ, we gave up ourselves and all our's to the Lord, and so must we say, "we are thy servant's, O Lord! truly we are thy servants." But of others, Satan is their lord and proprietor.

3. My Redeemer. "He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity." When our lives were forefeited to the justice of God, he came and bought them with his precious blood. And shall any thing be too dear to us to lose for him.

4. My Lord and husband. He sought the believer in spiritual marriage, who has consented to him, and so he is their husband. A noble relation! "For thy maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name." And therefore it is below a child of God to prostitute himself, his soul and conscience, to the lusts of men, or pollute them to please the greatest on earth.

Lastly, My Lord and King. He has subdued them to himself. They have accepted him as their King and Lawgiver. His throne is in their hearts, and his laws are there; and therefore they can do nothing contrary to their allegiance to him, command it who will, under the most severe penalties. And in the strict observation of his laws, they may expect such protection and provision from him who is the King of kings, as he sees good for them.

The saints may plead this relation to him and interest in him, for they really have it. Though their real state be capable of degrees, and one is more holy than another, yet this honour have all the saints, and that equally. He is as much the Lord, God, Husband, and King of the meanest soever, as of the strongest. And they ought to plead it.

1. It is very pleasing to God, Jer. iii. 4. God loves to have his children know their relation to him, and therefore are the Scriptures written and the Spirit given, that we may know the things freely given us of God. We need not blame any but ourselves, if we walk in darkness. It is the weakness of our eyes that keeps us from seeing our privileges, and it robs God of the sacrifice of praise.

2. It is very comfortable and strengthening to the saints themselves, 2 Pet. i 10. This would not only heighten our comforts in the worst of times, but heighten our graces, our love, repentance, obedience, our trust in him, and dependence upon him.

Use I. O! the happy state of the saints, beyond all the world. Christ is theirs. *Mine* is a sweet word, especially when it is joined to the most glorious object. Nebuchadnezzar could say, my kingdom, my majesty; but my Lord and my God, is a note of an infinitely higher strain. This is a property that is above all other,

that may comfort in the want of all, and will supply all other wants, and is a property which none can take from us.

2. Let the saints improve their faith to this degree of assurance, that they may confidently, though humbly, call Christ their Lord. But of this before. It is the weakness of the saints, that they dare not say, My Lord. It is no presumption in a gracious soul to say so, who has taken Christ for his Lord. Thou mayest say it.

1. If Christ be Lord of thy heart, having the chief room in thy affections, Psal. lxxiii. 25, hast thou seen a glory in him, that has darkened all created excellency, so that he reigns in thy affections, and thy heart is his captive, so that he is dearer to thee than what is dearest in the world?—call him then thy Lord, for he is Lord of thy heart.

2. If he be Lord of thy life, so that thou endeavourest continually to live to him and not to thyself, not to thy lusts, Phil. i. 21. The great design thou hast in the world is to please him, and to walk before him to all well pleasing, in heart, lip and life; and what is displeasing to him, is displeasing and a burden to thee also. Call him then thy Lord.

3. If he be Lord of thy all, so that thou art content to part with all that is dear to thee rather than with him, his favour, his truths, his work, and cause, Luke xiv. 26. If thou hast laid down thy all at his feet, to be disposed of what way he will, call him then Lord.

Lastly, Let the people of God follow their duty to Christ as their Lord, in spite of all opposition from the world. If the commands of men go cross to the commands of Christ, though they were the highest powers on earth, let us remember we are to obey our Lord God rather than men; and let us never do a thing to please our lords on earth, that will displease our Lord from heaven. This day, alas! is a day in which the commands of our rulers on the ministry of this Church cannot be obeyed in the judgment of many worthy ministers, without disobeying our great Lord and Master; though others are not of that mind. This threatens to rend this Church asunder, to separate ministers from their flocks, and to shut up many kirk doors, and yours among the rest. Prepare for snares, and cleave to the Lord whatever come. If God baffle not the designs of our enemies, they will not rest here, but having begun at the sanctuary, there will be a proceeding to the city; and though ministers may smart first, professors will not want their share. But cleave ye to the Lord, to the purity of doctrine, worship, discipline and government instituted by himself; and though the laws of men should overturn all these, choose you rather to sit by the house of God, though lying in rubbish, than to embrace that in religion which has no stamp but that of human authority, for he is our Lord, and his orders we must obey on all hazards.

[Same subject continued.]

SERMON XV.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 8,

For whom I have suffered the loss of all things.

THIS is a day in which suffering or sinning is set before many in this church; and though our case is extraordinary, yet our good Lord sends us this in our ordinary, which gives an evidence of a due esteem of Christ, which the saints have.

1. We have in the words, the apostle's lot, which tried his esteem of Christ, by his suffering for him. He had spoken much to the commendation of Christ, but many will give Christ a good word, who will not take a frown, an ill word, or a buffet for his sake; but Paul suffered for him.

We have next what he suffered; the loss of all things. When he says *all*, he excepts nothing which might come in competition with Christ, external good things, yea, and internal also, as in competition with him. We have also the cause of his sufferings; they were for Christ, for the sake of that precious one.

DOCTRINE. God tries, and the saints give proof of their due esteem of Christ, by their suffering the loss of all things for him, as they are called to it. There are two things aimed at in the text, namely, external good things. Saints suffer the loss of these two ways for Christ: 1. In affection, when they lose the predominant affection to them, Luke xiv. 26; when the heart is so far weaned from them, as they are content to part with them, rather than Christ. This is a suffering, in so far as it is not easy, but opposite to nature to be content to let them go for Christ. 2. In action, when they actually lose them for Christ and his cause, and let them go rather than a good conscience. Sometimes storms arise in the church, so as men must either part with Christ, his way, and his truths, or else let all they have go for his sake.

Next internal good things. The saints suffer the loss of these in point of confidence, when all their confidence is carried off them, and laid on Christ alone. Both of these are aimed at in the text. I will now speak a word to the first, namely, external things. And,

I. I will touch at those things which the saints always suffer the loss of in affection, and often in action, for Christ. They must lay their account,

1. With the loss of their credit, esteem, and reputation. "We

are fools," says the apostle, "for Christ's sake." None can be wise to the Lord, who are not content to be the world's fools. None will go to heaven but their reputation will run a risk sometime or other. The worldly wise will look upon them as a company of weak men, and the wicked will be ready to count them madmen. Nay, they may lay their account with their credit getting a jog, even among professors also.

2. The loss of their worldly goods, Heb. x. 34. When Joseph is flying from the temptation, the devil takes hold of the mantle of worldly substance, and they must either leave Christ, or they shall not know how to live in the world.

3. The loss of ease and quiet. Sometimes they sit every one under his vine, each at his own table and fireside, but when persecutions arise they may be hunted as partridges, and not have where to lay their heads.

4. The loss of outward comforts and conveniencies. The saints have often got caves for their houses, been exposed to the want of all things, to hunger, thrist, nakedness, with no certain dwelling-place.

5. The loss of their relations. Husbands dragged from their wives, and wives from their husbands. In such cases they lose liberty, and suffer confinement, imprisonment or banishment. Racks, tortures, and scourges, are inflicted upon them, and these often terminate in the loss of their lives, and even after death their bones are not allowed to rest in their graves. Now let us enquire,

II. What it is to suffer these things for Christ. It is to suffer them for Christ's sake. The saints get pardon, peace, and every blessing from God, for Christ's sake; and they must take stripes and blows from the hands of men. But more of this, when God gives another opportunity.

November, 2, 1712.

[Same subject continued.]

SERMON XVI.

PHILIPPIANS, iii. 8,

For whom I have suffered the loss of all things.

THE last Lord's day, I told you several things, with the loss of which the saints might lay their accounts for Christ. There is one

thing, which, from experience, we are taught they may lay their account to lose, namely, the countenance and protection of the civil magistrate in their duty. This is in itself a great loss. And seeing God has promised to a church, when he is well pleased with her, "that kings shall be her nursing fathers, and their queens her nursing mothers;" the withdrawing of it must be a sign of the Lord's displeasure. Yea, and if we trace the sins of rulers that bear hard on the people to their first spring, we will find that it is some quarrel that God hath with the people, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. This should humble us, and stir us up to pray for them, and be dutiful to them, to whom the Lord has said, "ye are gods," in every thing that is not inconsistent with your duty to God himself. But this is a trial to us, whether we will regard God or man most; and the saints will ever prefer the countenance of the Lord, to the countenance of the highest powers on earth; and depend upon his protection alone, when they are deprived of all other.

I told you, likewise, what it is to suffer the loss of any thing for Christ. I said, 1. It is to suffer for Christ's sake. 2. For the truths, the ways, and the cause of Christ. I will now add,

3. It is to suffer upon Christ's call to suffering. We are not to cast ourselves into suffering, even for a good cause, at random. We are not lords of ourselves, and therefore must not throw away our peace, goods, liberty, or life, but when God calls for them, and when that is the case, then all should be at his service. Now God calls us to it, when it is brought to that, to suffer or sin. "We must choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season." If people cannot get over the waters of suffering but in the devil's boat, which is always a sieve to sink a good conscience, though it may save men's persons and goods, they must even be content to swim. If the cross lie just in the way of duty, and there be no way of getting by it, but by going out of the way, we must even take it up and be going.

4. To suffer for the love of Christ. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." This is more than merely to suffer for his sake. Many a man, in time of the church's trouble, gets a blow for Christ's sake, that deserves it not at the enemy's hand; for, at the bottom, they are even men of their own party, the seed of the serpent, though found among Christ's doves; mere hypocrites, they suffer not for Christ, seeing it is not for love to him, of which they are void. A Roman spirit may outbrave death itself; a rugged, opposing spirit may put men to suffer the hardest things, rather than yield. Yea, self is such a salamander as can live in

fire, for a good cause. Though we give our bodies to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth us nothing. But the hearts of honest sufferers are hardened against opposition of men, by soft love to the Lord himself; to his work, cause, and truths, for his own sake. "Thou, Lord, hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth."

Lastly, It is to suffer as a member of the body of Christ. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." There was a measure of sufferings laid out for Christ personal, and he alone did bear them: "He endured the cross." But there is a measure of sufferings for Christ mystical, which is divided amongst the members of Christ, as their head sees meet, and every one must take their share; and thus "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in their flesh; for his body's sake, which is the church." Some must give in of their goods, some their liberty, some their blood, to fill up this measure. And thus they suffer, that suffer for Christ. I come now to the

III. Thing, Why the Lord trysts his people with suffering the loss of all things for him.

1. Because there are no things which they can long guide well, and he will not permit them to destroy themselves with them. The father gives his child a knife in the sheath, to divert himself with it; but within a little, the child draws out the knife, and plays with it. "Go," says the father, "take it from him, for he will hurt himself with it." So God gives his people ease, peace, and wealth; and so long as these are swallowed up with them in the love of God, they can do them no harm; but alas! they often childishly throw aside the love of the Lord, and solace themselves with the bare worldly enjoyments, and love to these things gets uppermost in their hearts; then comes the word from the Lord, Take them from them. Such a man has made a pillow of security of such a thing, he is sleeping upon it, and minds not his work: go, draw the pillow from under his head, that he sleep not to death upon it. It is no wonder to see wasters want. We have had long peace in the enjoyment of ordinances. God removes that peace, that he may make us thankful of the crumbs which sometimes fall from our tables. Then the word of the Lord becomes precious, when there is no open vision.

2. To exercise and quicken their graces, to make them thrive the better inwardly. "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit, to take away their sin." The Christian, like the palm-tree, or camomile bed, the more he is afflicted, the more he grows. The fire burns hottest in a cold frost,

and the wind of persecution makes grace to flame, and blows away the ashes. The waters of affliction cast on the faces of fainting Christians has often made them recover. And sure this generation needs such an awakening. Sufferings tend to the conviction of men, Jer. ii. 23, 35. Solomon tells us, "that oppression maketh a wise man mad;" and a greater than he lets us see it will make a mad man wise, as in the case of the prodigal, Luke xv. 17. No doubt, sufferings will make all of us see faults in our way, which we had no will to acknowledge in our prosperity. Sufferings also make sin bitter. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." Sin is like Ezekiel's roll, sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. When the Lord writes the sin in the punishment, the smart of the wound will make sin bitter. It will then be as gall and wormwood on the breasts, to wean the child. They are also a hedge in the sinner's way, Hosea ii. 6. Many are riding post away from the Lord, till the cross meet them, as the angel did Balaam, and makes them stand. And truly, if the Lord did not so with us, where would we be in a little time. It is God's goodness to the Church of Scotland, that he doth not allow her to have a long time in sinning, but takes her quickly, when she is going away from him. Afflictions also stir up the saints to take hold of a departing God, Hos. ii. 7. Sufferings are the devil's wedges, driven to separate the saints from Christ. But God makes them cords to draw them to him, and make them cleave to him with purpose of heart, as the child cleaves to the nurse the more that one offers to pluck it from her.

3. To learn them to live by faith. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." There is never so much glory given to God in believing, as in a suffering time; the promises of the covenant never smell so sweet as then. Nay, there are many promises in the Bible, of which the saints never taste the sweetness till then. While their worldly enjoyments stand entire about them, they live much by sense. While they live at ease in their own houses, the shelter that is in that promise, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all ages," is not so sweet as when they have nothing else to depend upon. The daily bread in the promise is not so sweet when we have plenty, as when we are in needy circumstances.

4. To be a real testimony before the world of the superlative excellency of Christ, and the reality of religion. While the world sees men whom they cannot deny to be otherwise wise and sober, and having a due concern about their worldly enjoyments, yet suffer

the loss of all, rather than part with Christ and his way, it must needs leave a conviction on their consciences of these things. While they see this, it is a testimony before them to this, that Christ's favour, and way, are better than all the world; preferable to relations, goods, yea, and life itself. For his favour with them weighs down the world's frowns; and the testimony of their conscience, that bird within their breast, makes the sweetest of all melody. This conduct of the saints under sufferings is also a testimony to the life to come against an atheistical generation. What do they fear, that they choose suffering rather than sinning; not the wrath of him "that can only kill the body," for sinning were the way to preserve it; but the wrath of him "that can destroy both soul and body in hell." What do they hope for, great things in the world? No, they lose what they have, they therefore look for a reward and recompense in another world. It is also a testimony to the power which there is in religion, to wean the heart from the world. "Job is but a dissembler," says the devil, "but put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." But Job makes the devil a liar. There is a power in religion, which makes them suffer the loss of all. It in like manner establishes this grand truth, that there is a power in religion to make men live without these things, which the carnal world cannot want; that there is a communication betwixt God and the soul, that can supply the want of all things. God will let his people see he can make them live very well without these things, and he will let the world see it too, John xiv. 19.

5. It is to make them long for heaven, and so to prepare them for a place among them that stand at his right hand. If they were not so harshly entertained in the world, they would not so much long to be home. But the rugged way which they find in the wilderness makes them long to see the land of Canaan. While the sea of this world is calm to the people of God, they are in hazard of saying, "It is good for us to be here." Therefore the Lord raiseth a storm, the ship is tossed to and fro, then they long to be on shore in Immanuel's land.

6. That what they get, they may the better see from what a blessed hand it comes. God loves to have his people know that they are in his common for what they have in a world. When men have all at hand, they do not so well understand their holding; therefore he calls in his own benefits sometimes, to keep them from hand to mouth; and make them many errands to the throne of grace, that what they had before in a more ordinary way, may come to them as an answer of prayer.

Use 1. Of information. It lets us see,

1. That no man is a saint indeed, but he to whom Christ is dearer than what is dearest to him in the world, Luke xiv. 26. Every child of God is a martyr either in action or affection. Grace, when it comes into the heart, so looseth all worldly things at the root, that if ever it come to that, that the man must either lose Christ, or lose all, he will suffer rather the loss of all things.

2. That Christ hath not his due esteem in the heart, where the man can by no means suffer the loss of all for him. The shifting of the cross, by sinning against the Lord, however it may prevail sometimes on the saints, if it be a man's habitual practice, will prove him to be none of his, for it says that the love of the world is predominant in such a person.

Use 2. Of exhortation. Let me exhort you then to be ready to evidence your esteem of Christ, by suffering the loss of all things for him, when he calls you to it. Be not offended at the cross of Christ, but embrace it. And be not choosers of the cross. Some will be willing to part with such a thing for Christ, but there is another they cannot part with. But you must make no reserve. Alas! that this exhortation is so very seasonable. The half hour's silence in the heaven of this Church seems to be at an end. The plough that made such deep furrows on the back of this Church formerly, stands now yoked again; the cords of it, which the Lord cut, are knit again, and how soon the word may be given to drive on, we know not. But if it were once set agoing, it is very like it may make deeper furrows on the back of the Church of Scotland than ever it yet made since her youth, though we hope it shall be loosed sooner. Idolatrous papists and superstitious bigots make furious drivers. "Let us contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints," and cleave to that purity of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, to which this Church hath by the mercy of God attained; to which she stands engaged by the covenants; and which has been handed down to us, sealed with the blood of many martyrs. "Let us stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Let our esteem of Christ, his truths, ways and work, be displayed in our suffering the loss of all things, rather than give up with them.

Motive 1. We will betray Christ's cause, if we shift his cross. And woe be to that man who doth this. It is impossible in the way of God's dispensation laid down in the Scripture, that the church should continue in the world without sufferings. "For we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." Do we think that ever the seed of the woman and the seed of the

serpent will be at peace? that ever the ship of the church will get to the haven, without the devil's raising a storm to sink her? Where had Christianity been this day, if the primitive Christians had complied with their pagan persecutors, and refused to suffer? Where had the Protestant religion been, if bloody cruelties could have frightened our ancestors into popery? And where had our Church been this day, if the fining, imprisoning, banishing, executing of the opposers of abjured prelacy, had frightened all into a tame compliance with the course of defection then carried on. So that whosoever shall choose to sin rather than suffer, will for his part give Christ and his work freedom to depart out of our coasts.

2. Consider the danger of apostacy from the good ways of the Lord, because of the cross. "If any man draw back," saith God, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." This makes men unsavoury salt, withered branches, and ordinarily ends in the candle of their life going out with a stink; either going off in fearful stupidity, or horror. "Hold fast, then, the form of sound words as ye have been taught" for many years, and however you may be afterwards trysted, let it appear that you have not heard nor professed in vain. And though grievous wolves enter among you, let it be seen that you are Christ's sheep that discern his voice, and that will not refuse even his fire mark, rather than to be marked for another.

3. Consider that whatever Christ shall mark out for his, among the things you have, whenever he has said, give up with it for me, it will not be worth the keeping longer. For what? It will be like the manna, which the people kept until the morning, against the express command of God, which stank and bred worms. The plague of God will be in it, and it will never after do you good. "It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make inquiry." If Christ shall say, Man, give up with your ease, goods, liberty, life, for me; thou hadst better be harrassed, tossed and stripped of thy substance, than be at ease in thy own house, amidst all thy enjoyments. Nothing in the world can be more to us than what God makes it be. We can get no good of what we have, but what goodness God puts in it. But in this the substance is out of it. An evil conscience will put a sting in it, and either silently or violently suck the sap out of it.

4. What is lost for Christ will be the surest and best laid out thing in your possession. It is good lending to the Lord. You will have his bond for it. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and

shall inherit eternal life." See here the interest secured, and that is a very extraordinary interest, an hundred for one. That is peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, sweet contentment, with any thing that is left, and a blessing in it. A little for present support, served up in the dish of a promise and a particular providence, which you will see as if you saw the face of God; which is an hundred-fold better than any thing lost for him. See also the principal secured, but exchanged into eternal life, in heaven.

November 9, 1712.

[Same subject continued.]

SERMON XVII.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 8,

For whom I have suffered the loss of all things.

Now, let me urge, by a few motives, that ye be not choosers of the cross, but let all without reserve be at his service.

MOTIVE 1. Absolute resignation of ourselves to the will of the Lord is necessary to evidence our sincerity. There is no reality where there is any reserve, for where Christ has the chief room in the heart, every thing will give place to him, Acts xx. 24. The will must be the first sufferer, if ever a man suffer to purpose. It must be melted down into an universal compliance with the will of God.

2. Christ's standard will never be kept up in the world by a company of men who have any thing with which they cannot part for Christ. Persecution is like a fire, that will burn on and consume, aye and until it meet with something that will not burn. The wicked's malice will not end, till they can go no farther.

3. It is in some sort all one what we suffer for Christ; for in our own strength we cannot acceptably suffer the loss of any thing for him; but in his strength we are able to sustain the greatest loss, and yet say, "we have all, and abound." Peter denied Christ, at the voice of a maid; but when strengthened by his Master's grace, his boldness was so astonishingly great, "that even the rulers took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus." The Lord gives

people strength suited to their burden. It is as easy for a strong man to lift a stone weight, as for a child to lift a pound.

4. The small things we lose for Christ, are lost indeed as to divine acceptation, when not willing to part with all for him. He will not be served by halves, nor according to our will, Mal. i. 13; 2 John viii.

Lastly, Christ stood at no loss, as too hard for us. He took the whole cup, and wrung out the dregs of it. What had become of us, had Christ dealt with the Father, as we do with him? No, but he was content to be the Father's servant in all, Psal. xl.

Directions. 1. Labour to get your hearts loosed from the world. "Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Now if you would be thus loosed from the world, then let your hearts be going out more after heaven. I must put these together, for there is no parting of them. The heart will never give up its hold of the world till it be to fix on heaven. So you must do with your hearts as they do with children, when they offer to take one thing from them, they must do it by putting another thing in their hand. Now if the heart were loosed, worldly things would fall off easily, as ripe fruit from a tree; and the affections set on heaven, fit for suffering, Phil. iii. 18, 19, 20.

2. Strive to get the coal of holy zeal blown up in your spirits. A bird shall as soon fly without wings, as one suffer aright without zeal for God. Zeal is an heat of the affections to Christ, his cause, his truths, and way. It is properly an affection that is betwixt married persons, by which they resent the affronts put upon their yoke-fellow, especially with respect to their chastity. "For I am jealous over you," says Paul, "with godly jealousy," 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. (Greek,) zealous over you with zeal. And if ever there was a time for this zeal, it is now, when so many are crying, let Zion be defiled, when they are setting themselves to deal with our mother as with an harlot.

3. Study experimental religion. There is no disputing against sense and feeling. Hence the unlearned, but experienced Christian has stood it out, when the disputers of this world have fallen. Study to keep up the power of godliness, communion with God in duties, and to feel the power of truth upon your hearts. Personal holiness in men's private walk is an excellent help to their keeping right in public trials.

4. Renew your repentance, and let there be no standing quarrel betwixt God and you. Unmortified, unrepented sin, leaves a sting in the conscience, deprives us of confidence with God, and so unfits us for bearing the cross.

Lastly, Live by faith. "The just shall live by faith." Let faith be employed to cast your burden on the Lord; the burden of your duty, protection, provision, and through-bearing on Christ, and to keep in your eye the promised reward, Heb. xi. 26.

I should now come to speak of these things of which the saints suffer the loss, in point of confidence, for Christ. But I have before, on the third verse, spoken of these things, internal and external, with which they give up in point of confidence. I will only hint at two things:

1. The saints suffering the loss of their sufferings for Christ, in point of confidence in them. Sirs, you heard what you may be obliged to lose for Christ; but I will tell you one thing more which you must give up for him, when you have suffered the loss of all these; and that is, all confidence in these your sufferings, or else you will lose them all indeed; as when you have done, so when you have suffered, "you must say you are unprofitable servants." They will perish in their sufferings, who make their sufferings their confidence before the Lord. Consider,

1. This has been the way of all honest sufferers, Gal. vi. 14; compare 2 Cor. xi. 23. See also Rev. vii. 14, 15. When they have lost all for him, they have renounced confidence in all, and fled naked to the horns of the altar, and durst not plead for his favour for their sufferings, but for the Lord's sufferings.

2. To plead upon sufferings for Christ is a dreadful mark of a graceless sufferer, Matth. xx. 12—16. It is a sign men seek themelves and not the Lord in their sufferings, therefore they get their penny, the credit and reputation among the saints that they were seeking, and that is all.

3. What is the Lord obliged to us, when we have suffered the loss of all? Have we done more than our duty; yea, than our interest led us to? If a beggar should come in, and crave his alms as debt, because, forsooth, he stood at your door, and would not go away, though a heavy rain was falling on him all the time, what would you think of his plea? So it is with us, if we plead the merit of our sufferings.

4. None of our sufferings will abide the trial of the law, so that in our best performances that way there is sin to condemn us. So that if God would enter into judgment with us for our sufferings, we would be ruined by them. The greatest patience wants not a mixture of impatience, and the strongest faith some remaining unbelief.

Lastly, It is our honour to suffer for Christ, and considering our unworthiness and sinfulness, we may wonder if ever God honour

the like of us to bear his cross. And therefore such persons are deeper in debt to free grace than other persons; because that they had any thing to lose for Christ, which many have not, and that when they had it, they had a heart to part with it for him.

2. I would take notice of the difficulty of parting with these things, in point of confidence. Such a difficulty it was to the apostle, that it was a perfect suffering on his part. He had a difficulty in renouncing them, but yet he did it.

1. It is difficult, for it is above nature to do it. It is harder for a man to renounce confidence in his suffering, than it is to suffer; or in his duties when done, than it is to do them. The latter are not beyond the power of nature, the former are, Phil. iii. 3; Matth. v. 3. The influence of the law may bear a man out to the latter, but gospel grace is necessary to the former.

It is contrary to nature to do it. Not only nature cannot do it, but cannot but resist the doing of it. Nature bends always to the way of the covenant of works, which was to depend upon the good done by the man himself, and is opposite to the way of believing, which carries a man out of himself to Christ. This is a suffering to a proud heart, to have its beautiful feathers thus pulled down and trampled in the dust. To be obliged to another for life, while it thought it had a sufficiency of its own. To be at pains to do and suffer for the Lord, and after all to be obliged to renounce all it has done and suffered, and betake itself to the doing and suffering of another: to work for the winning of heaven, and then to overlook all as if they had done nothing. It is no evidence of acquaintance with the heart, where men find nothing of this difficulty. This weed grows in all men's hearts naturally, however few do sweat at the plucking it up. Amen.

[Same subject continued.]

SERMON XVIII.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 8,

And do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

MANY are mistaken in their first accounts, and therefore throw away what they would gladly take up again, when they have made a

second reckoning. Such are the foolish builders, Luke xiv. 29. But the apostle, who first counted all loss, and then parted with them for Christ, upon a review counts them but dung or dog's meat, such things as are only fit to be cast to the dogs: and so repents not his parting with them, but takes his heart away from them all, that he may gain Christ. This was his grand object in the world, to which all things behoved to yield. And gaining Christ with the loss of all, counts himself a great gainer.

Doctrine I. It is the Christian's grand object in the world, and should be the grand design of every one, to win, or gain Christ.

O, my brethren! what is your grand object or design in the world? what is the great business which you have in view? No doubt it is to win something. But what is that something which you chiefly set yourselves to win? Is it to win preferment? to win an estate? a stock to yourselves, and your families to live upon, after you? To win a livelihood? Are these your grand objects in the world? I fear most of us rise no higher. These are too mean, too grovelling. I shew you a more excellent way. If you make not this your choice, you will be fools indeed.

I. I will shew you what it is to win Christ, and how we are to win him.

II. Give the reasons of the point. Let us then,

I. Shew what it is to win Christ, and how we are to win him.

To win or gain Christ, is to get him to be ours. To get an interest in him, and enjoy him. This we have always to seek till we come to heaven, where we will have the full enjoyment of him. This is that which is the grand object of some, and should be of us all. Now this winning of Christ imports, that naturally we are without Christ, Eph. ii. 12. He is not ours naturally. This spiritual relation to Christ must be by the sinner's consent, who must take him for Lord and Husband, and then he is theirs. But all naturally are destitute of an interest in this blessed treasure. It imports, also, that Christ is gain. They are great gainers that get him. He is an inestimable treasure, "the treasure hid in the field." "The one pearl of great price." They are enriched for ever that have him to be theirs. Lose who will, they are gainers. The blind world see no beauty for which he is to be desired. But it is no wonder to see the most gainful bargain slighted by fools, who have a price put into their hand to get it, but have no heart for it. It imports that this gain may be got. We may have Christ for the winning. The treasure is hid in the field, they may have it that will dig for it. Christ is revealed and offered in the gospel. The door of access to him is open. The proclamation is made, "whosoever will, let him take the water of

life freely." It is our own fault if we want him. But they that will have him must win him ere they can get him. People must not think to sit at ease, and wait till heaven drop down into their mouths; or that an interest in Christ, and the enjoyment of him, will be obtained by drowsy wishes, with folded hands. No, we must lay this bargain to heart, and leave no stone unturned to make it effectual; nay, in order to win him,

1. We must work and win as labourers do. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." It will cost working, and sore working. What severer work, than that of those who dig in mines. "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Up then, you lazy souls, if you would have a Christ; you must put your hand to work; yea, your heart must be set to work. "Ye shall seek me and find, saith the Lord; when you shall search for me with all your heart." God gives Christ freely; but I assure you it is to labourers, not to loiterers, that gift is made. You will toil sore to win something for the body, but what are you doing to win Christ?

2. We must fight and win as soldiers. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." If you have a mind for Christ, to come even to his seat, you must fight your way to it. "To him that overcometh," saith he, "will I give to sit with me on my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Whenever a soul is on the way to Christ, the alarm is sounded in hell, and if the soul will have him, it must have him in opposition to flesh and blood, principalities and powers. You must fight your way through the white band of the world's smiles, profits, and pleasures; and refuse to be held by these silken cords, which the devil uses to keep souls from Christ; and also through the black band of temptations, doubts, fears, discouragements, that he will muster up against you; and, by all appearance, the red band too, so that it may cost you to resist unto blood, Heb. xii. 4. Sometimes Satan gets plunderings, prisons, tortures, yea, and death, set up between Christ and them that would be at him; but you must fight and win, saying, in all these things, "we shall be more than conquerors, through him that loved us."

3. We must wrestle and win, as those do who strive for the mastery, Eph. vi. 12—14. There will be a combat, in which you must be engaged against your own lusts, "for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." If you tamely yield, truly you will never win Christ. You must in his strength cast them down, get them nailed to his cross, and make your way

over them, to the enjoyment of himself. You must cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes, that you may win Christ.

4. We must run and win as racers do. "So run that ye may obtain." "Lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset you, and run with patience the race set before you." There is a race proposed by the Lord, namely, the profession of the truth, and practice of holiness. The Lord Christ and his apostles opened the race, and ever since that time there have been many who engaged to run that race. But as soon as it was opened, the devil planted thorns on the race ground, kindled fires, set up gibbets, laid misery, shame, grief, poverty, and temptations of all sorts in the way. Many fell, many turned back, a great many run faintly, but all go forward that win Christ. In the world, men suppose but two fixed points, the highest and the lowest; the bodies betwixt the two are in continual motion. In the rational world, the glorified are in the highest point, the damned in the lowest. Both fixed, neither of them can go farther. We that are betwixt the two, are in motion either to heaven or hell. If we would win Christ, then, let us set our face heavenward, and run and win.

5. We must trade and win as merchants do. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." And, as spiritual merchants, we must be at pains; we must exchange and win, as they do. They that have a mind for Christ, have much business in the royal exchange of heaven. And you will say they win indeed, if you consider what they exchange with the Lord. "A new heart also," says he, "will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh." Christ takes off their rags, and gives them his robes of righteousness. He frees them from the curse, and sends them away with the blessing. You must also sell and win, as merchants do. I had occasion, on another subject, to tell you how you must sell all you have at the market of free grace, Mark x. 22, and condescended on the particulars which you are to sell. Be sure this is a gaining trade.

You must also buy and win, as merchants do. I find three things, which the spiritual merchant, who would win Christ, is this day called to buy. Precious truth. "Buy the truth, and sell it not." It can never be too dear bought; whatever people may pay for it, they are gainers. This is like to be a time for selling of the truth, and persons of Judas' trade will never be wanting, saying, "what will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you." But

let men get for it what they will, they will find at length that they have made a fool's bargain, and they will be losers at the end of the day. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" A second thing you ought to buy, is precious time. "Redeeming the time," says Paul. We have had a long time of selling it, and squandering it away, though we have not enriched ourselves with the price. We have allowed our precious opportunities of communion with God to go for trifles. But buy again now, for the days are evil. That is, as the merchant who has foolishly neglected his business most of the day, plys it most eagerly when he sees the market is near a close, if by any means he may make up his former loss. So do you. The third thing you must buy, is the precious riches of Christ. "I counsel thee," says he, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed." His merit; that is, gold able to purchase heaven. His righteousness; raiment for your souls. His Spirit; salve for your blind eyes. It is a blessed market this. You cannot but be gainers. Here we are to "buy without money and without price." For I hope you will not count upon renouncing your own merits, righteousness and wisdom, as a price for these things. You must also export and import, as merchants do. Our trade to heaven consists much in our export to Immanuel's land. And what have we to export, but the home product of guilt, weakness, poverty and wants. But let us carry them all away to the Lord, we will gain by it, leaving them there. We must import the products of the King's country, consisting of pardons for our guilt, strength for our weakness, and fulness for our wants, and then we will gain indeed. We now proceed,

II. To give reasons of the point. It is the Christian's great object to win Christ, and should be the great object of all.

1. Because if we win Christ, we gain all. This is the shortest way to make up a stock, a treasure that will enrich us for ever, in time and eternity. He thought so who said, "one thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after." So also did the wise merchant, Matth. xiii. 45, 46. He were a foolish man who would spend his time in making a great number of petty bargains, by which he gained but little, and would neglect a bargain that would make up for all his days, when in his offer. Thou art the man, whose great object is not to win Christ. If you win Christ, you are made up for time. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is." What would you have for time? Would you have food and raiment? win Christ, and you shall have

them. With the kingdom of God your great object, "all these things shall be added unto you." It will be a very bad time indeed, in which Christ's spouse may not promise herself food and raiment. It is not an uncertain, but sure thing: "Bread shall be given her, her water shall be sure." She wants then only a dwelling-place: well, "she shall dwell on high; yea, the Lord himself is her dwelling-place, in all generations." But some people would have land too. Then there is no such sure way to make a purchase as this, win Christ. He is Lord of all the land in the world, and the whole earth is thine in the right of thy husband, Matth. v. 5. But what will people do for money? Win Christ, and you shall not want it. "The Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver." (Hebrew,) gold; and the silver of thy strength.

Objection. Yes, says the unbeliever, these are brave words, but depend upon them, and see what they will bring in to thy treasure, Answer. They are God's words, and his good words are better than all the world's good deeds. God gives some persons, for whom he hath no special care, their portion in their hand, and sends them away; and others, his dearest children, he gives them the good words of a promise, and keeps them at home with himself. Say now, who has the best of it, Matth. xxv. 34, "Ye blessed of my Father;" (Greek,) you to whom my Father hath spoken well. God's good words have always good deeds in their bosom. He will not approve of those who say to the needy, "be ye clothed, be ye fed, but give not the things that are needful for the body." And will he be found such an one himself? No, no. Many of the saints have depended upon his words, and they have been fed and clothed, and left their experience on record, Psal. xxxiv. 6—10. They have declared, that like the disciples, "they had lacked nothing." The mistake of the unbeliever is, he thinks God's bond cannot be paid, unless it be paid in cash, the very thing itself. No, God can make it out another way, and his people can say, "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Had Moses any reason to complain, when he wanted meat forty days, when God so supported him, that he needed it not. Adam lived very well at first, when the heaven was the roof of his house, the earth his floor, the grass his seat, and the shade of trees his bed-chamber. He did not complain of the want of a house, when God was his God, and he was so provided. Stamped leather has sometimes gone for money, and they that had enough of it were even as rich as they that have the silver and gold now; and if it was as good, I hope you may allow the Almighty himself to be better than gold.

Again, thou art made up for eternity. "Godliness is profitable

unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Come death when it will, thy lodging is taken up on the other side of Jordan. Thou hast won the Lord of the land to be thine, how canst thou be but welcome there? John xiv. 2. The law cannot lay aught to thy charge, for he has satisfied it, and thou mayest say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." Justice cannot apprehend thee, for the debt is paid and Christ has got up thy discharge. When the gain of other people, who are winning the world, is at an end, thy gain is but in some sort beginning to come in, but it is a gain that will tell out through the ages of eternity.

2. Because if we win not Christ, we win nothing, we lose all. We lose our souls, and where is our gain then? Matth. xvi. 26. Without Christ, without hope, for he is the only way to the Father, John xiv. 6. The wise people of the world need not boast of their winning; they are penny wise and pound foolish, win what they will, seeing they win not Christ. Whatever they are winning, there is a thousand times more going to destruction in the meantime. Would he be a wise man that would go abroad in the harvest, and while he is winning by some little bargain, his whole crop in the meantime is shaken with the wind, and rotten with the rain. That is thy case, O man! thou art abroad winning the world, but all is going wrong at home within thy own soul. And when thou comest home to thyself, at death, or otherwise, it will be sad. Whatever you are winning, is but like children winning of their fellows, that will never make them rich, never buy meat nor clothes to them. It is money "for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not." A thousand worlds will not purchase a pardon; a heaven to you, without which you will be miserable. It is a poor trade, where a man is not winning Christ. It will never bring him the one thing necessary, and what winning can be there?

Whatever you are winning, if you would count what you give out, as well as what you get in, you would find all your winning is worse than nothing. Count your days, your precious time, precious opportunities of grace and salvation, your precious souls laid out in winning the things of the world, but not Christ; each of which is far more precious than what you can win that way, and you will see you win nothing by the bargain, but are great losers.

Use 1. It reproves several sorts of persons; and first, those who are taken up about nothing but to win the world, utterly neglecting to win Christ, and to get an interest in him. There is little difference between such and the brutes. They work, and eat, and sleep; these are the all of the beasts, and the all of some who are worse

than the beasts. They never seriously set themselves to get matters right for their souls. It were their advantage that they could die as the beasts, as they live like them.

You whose business it is to win Christ, but it is not your main business. It is but a bye-hand work with you. It is the world that is nearer your hearts than an interest in Christ, and the enjoyment of him. You walk with God at all adventures. Assure yourselves that no man will stumble upon Christ by accident, or snapper into heaven, or fall into it by guess. If you make it not your chief business, you may gain a name, but you will never win Christ.

Those who sell the truth and a good conscience, that they may get the world kept. People that will sail with every wind, and keep always on the side that is upmost in the world, are not in the way to win Christ; "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." Take heed to yourselves, our time is like to be an ensnaring time. You will be fair to lose the world and its countenance, or to lose Christ. But be you ready to let all go which you cannot hold in his own way, with his favour.

Those who will not stand to sell soul and conscience, to win something of the world, if they can but get their hands on it. They are careful for nothing but their credit, which is in hazard too, if so be they can gain some little thing in the world. It seems we have such persons among us, by the frequent complaints people are making of their losses that way, not only by picking, but stealing. May the good Lord discover them for a terror to others! O! how are people's consciences thus seared, and their hearts hardened to defy that curse, that roll of curses that God has said he will send into the house of the thief, Zech. v. 4; that bill of eternal exclusion from heaven, passed against the unrighteous, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Read their doom, Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

Use 2. I exhort you to make it your main business in the world to win Christ. Consider this is the way in which every person may win, the poor as well as the rich. It is not much the most part of us can rationally propose to win to ourselves in the world. It is difficult to win much, unless people have a good stock, and be very diligent also. But come here and win, even you that hath no money.

You have been at pains to win something of the world. Some of you have won, some of you have lost; many of you have real difficulty to win your daily bread. You have tried the one, will you not do so much as try the other also. Sirs, if you will not, your toil, sweat, and weariness, in winning the world, will be a witness against you before the Lord, that you could be at pains for other things, but at no pains for Christ.

This is the shortest way of winning. No man will choose the winning by many small bargains, when he can win all that and more by one great bargain. This is the case, win Christ and you win all. In short, it is a safe and sure way of winning. The best traders that ever carried on merchandise have lost of some bargains; but never one was a loser here. You will be sure to win if you set yourself to win Christ, and your winning will be beyond your expectation.

Lastly, It is a durable winning that can never be lost. People will be winners one year, and lose all that and more, another year; win of one bargain, and lose it again of another: but win Christ once, and you will never again lose your winning.

Use. 3. Of trial. You may see whether you be Christians or not. Try what is your grand object. Is it to win Christ, or not? You may know it by what follows.

Doctrine. II. They whose grand object in the world is to win Christ, will count all but dung that comes in competition with this bargain. For explication of this, they will count,

1. Nothing too much for him, but be content to have Christ on any terms. They will say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do." Dung is a worthless thing, that nobody makes account of. They will think no pains too much for him; and they that think otherwise, never saw the worth of the pearl, Prov. ii. 4, 5. They will hang on about his door, and think they speed well, if they be heard at length. They will count no cost too much. Sometimes men have a cheap religion; but it is not to be supposed that they will always get the Lord served with that which cost them nothing. It is very like that God will have a costly sacrifice of the hand of these nations; to which both his own people, and the enemies of religion and of his work, shall be obliged to contribute both of their goods and of their blood. These lands are defiled with blood. So many murderers escaping unpunished; and the blood of the saints shed in these nations remains unpurged, though it is like there may be more put to it, and the land may get blood to drink. It nearly concerns us that God hath said, "I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant." We have mixed with the nations and learned of them their ways, and justly may the Lord send the instruments of his vengeance from the places from which we have brought the atheism and profanity of the day. But cost what it will, the saints will think nothing too much, so as they win Christ.

2. Cost what it will, they will not think that they are even hands, but that they are gainers, if they can win Christ. Whatever be laid in the balance with Christ, it is but so much dung and dross for so much

gold. They must lay out for Christ, lusts dear as right eyes; yea, it may be also goods, liberty, and life. The carnal world cannot see how they can hold their own with such trading, and therefore will trade no such way. But he whose grand object is to win Christ, considers it the most gainful bargain; even a hundred-fold got in, for one given out, Matth. xix. 29.

3. Have what they will, they will count they have nothing, while they have not Christ. What avail barns, and coffers full of dung, to a man? What do food and clothing, riches and honour, avail to a man who sees the need and the worth of Christ? Will he not be ready to say, what wilt thou give me, if I go Christless? These things can do no more to my poor soul, than dung to my body. Could the soul dwell and feed with the swine, they would have enough, while they have dog's meat. This says, few make it their grand object to win Christ, seeing so many can live and reign as kings without him; and give them the world and their lusts, and they have the desire of their hearts.

4. Win what they will, they will count they win nothing, if they win not Christ. It is but dung they can win that way. The world thinks godly people fools, while they care not for winning, as they do. But see the world's fool's, while they lose so egregiously, yet count themselves gainers. Achan was no gainer, when he brought into his tent a wedge of gold, and a weight of wrath far heavier than the wedge. That meat is but dog's meat, that has a bone in it to stick in the throat of the eater. The open fields are better than a house in which brimstone is scattered on the habitation. Wealth, with the want of God's favour, is but dung in comparison of want, with God's good will. I am afraid there are but few who count this way.

5. Be about them what will, if Christ be not in them, they will count themselves loathsome with it all, like persons that have nothing but dung about them, Job ix. 31; therefore they count wicked men vile men, Psal. xv. 4. Rags, with righteousness, are more desirable to them than robes and gay apparel, where there is a naked soul. What is a throne for the body but dung, while Christ has not the throne of the heart; or riches, while men are not rich toward God.

6. Be in their way what will, to hinder them from Christ, they will shovel it out of their way as dung, rather than be kept back from Christ, Song viii. 6. 7. Him they cannot want, him they must have. "Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way; take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people." They must be at Zion; and if they should cut their way through rocks and over

mountains, they must be there; if a Red Sea were before them, it shall not stop them. O! how easily are the most of us kept back from Christ! Little thing will stand betwixt him and us, which we will be as loathe to cast out of our way, as if it were gold.

Lastly, If they cannot shovel it out of their way, they will tread and trample on it as dung, that they may win Christ. "Thus Levi said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." The street of the New Jerusalem is laid with gold, for the citizens thereof will tread on gold, and on what is most valuable in the world, that they may get forward to God. If waters be in their way, they will pass through them; and if fires, they will walk over them, and therefore all the travellers to Zion "have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

Use 1. Of information. This lets us see that there are few in the world whose grand object is to win Christ; so far are they from counting that dung which comes in competition with Christ. Nay, instead of that, people are worshipping dung gods, so the original calls idols. The gods of many are no other than gods coming out of the earth. It is the earth, and what is in it, that has most of their hearts. The belly is the god of many, the world of others, for covetousness is idolatry; yea, who is the god of this world, but the devil, Beelzebub; that is, the god of dung, (Syriac.)

They are also wallowing in the mire of profanity, 2 Pet. ii. 22. Mire, the word properly signifies the dung that is carried out of stables in which swine wallow. And what are these profane courses, but that which comes out of the vile stable of an unrenewed heart, Mark vii. 21. And alas! many washed swine are found there, who sometimes appeared another thing than they are now.

They are loading themselves with the thick clay of the world, Hab. ii. 6. Taking a complete burden of the world, pressing them so that they cannot get up their heads toward heaven. Surely these count not the world dung, or less of it would serve them. The cares of it stretch their minds like tenter hooks, and are Satan's cords binding them down to the earth, that they cannot lift up their souls to the Lord. Thus the houses of many are but dunghills, where all is for the world, nothing for God and themselves, but dung to fatten the earth, not to help to replenish heaven. Dust is their meat, for they are the serpent's seed, Isaiah lxv. 25. That is to say, they fetch their satisfaction from their lusts, they cannot rejoice in God, nor in the ways of holiness. These things are tasteless to them, and nothing relishes with them, but the husks of sin, which the swine of the world eat.

Finally, The worship of many is but dung and loathsome. God says to them, "I will spread dung on your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts." There is nothing of spirit in their worship. It is but a loathsome carcase of bodily exercise, which is good for nothing but to be cast out. They may value it themselves, for sometimes dung was valued highly, when "a fourth part of a cab of it was sold for five pieces of silver," but God abhors it. There was a gate in Jerusalem called the dung-gate, Neh. ii. 13. Such may be in the church, but they will be carried out at the dung-port by death, or otherwise; and see their end, "they shall perish for ever, like their own dung; they who have seen them shall say, where are they?"

Use 2. Evidence yourselves true Christians, by counting thus. There are three parts of counting, which the carnal world cannot learn, but Christians learn them at the school of Christ:

1. Counting days. "So teach us," says Moses, "to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom." The carnal, when they begin to count their time, they number by years, and many years, Luke xii. 19; and hence they always fool away the present time. But the Christian will count by days, and these few days short and uncertain, Gen. xlvii. 9; and "so apply their hearts unto wisdom."

2. Counting afflictions and trials to be gainful. The carnal world can make nothing of these that is desirable, but the total of them is still grief, sorrow, and loss; they cannot see how to make more of them. But the godly are taught to count them light, momentary, and gainful; yea, "as working for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They count them all joy, and that they are happy that endure them, James i. 2, and v. 11.

3. Counting things of this world, in competition with Christ, to their true value. The world is ever completely wrong in this counting. Here they count their mites to talents; and instead of fifty, set down an hundred. They count them ever above their worth, better than Christ and his favour. But Christians have learned to count them at another rate, all loss and dung for Christ; and I would have you count so. Consider,

1. How God accounts of them. The verdict of the Spirit concerning all is, "vanity of vanity, all is vanity." "Riches are that which is not." Agrippa's great pomp is, in the language of the Holy Ghost, much fancy, (Greek,) Acts xxv. 23. God is no accepter of persons. None of these things commend us to God, more than if we were naked and bare; the judgment of God is according to truth. Consider,

2. How you will account of them when you are going into another world, and when you are there. When death stares you in the face, and gives you a warning away from all you possess, what will you think of them then? When you are in another world, and standing before the judgment-seat of Christ, whether will grace or gold, robes or righteousness, Christ or the world, be of greatest value in your eyes?

3. Consider you will never honour Christ, and if so, he will never honour you. You will never honour him in your hearts, while you prefer every thing to him; nor in your lives, by doing much, or suffering for his cause. A man that counts not thus, is not fit for such a time as this, in which God seems to be about to put it to the trial, what men think of the world, in comparison of Christ.

Labour then to get a view of the glory, riches, and excellency of Christ, and then you will count all things but dung for him. If men knew the worth of Christ, they would think nothing too much for him.

Doctrine III. They are truly winners, lose what they will, that gain Christ. To confirm this point, consider,

What he is in himself. He is God, and so if he be yours, God is yours, for he is God; the Son of God begotten by the Father, by an eternal unspeakable generation, so that he has life in himself. He is man, God-man, fairer than the children of men. The human nature is united to the divine in the person of the Son, and so lies at the fountain head, as the bowl in Zechariah's candlestick.

2. Consider what he is to us:

1. Winning Christ, we gain a ransom for our souls. "He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity." If one were a slave to the Turks, what matter what he lost, if he gained a ransom for himself. We are debtors to justice, criminals in law, prisoners of Satan, bound over to the wrath of God by nature. Now the soul's redemption is precious. If we could gain the whole world, that could not ransom us, Hos. xiii. 14; Job xxxiii. 24.

2. Winning Christ, we gain a purchase. He not only ransoms us from the wrath of God, but purchaseth heaven to us. He gives us gold tried in the fire, to enrich us. If Christ be thine, he communicates his merit to thee for thy justification, and title to eternal life; so that it is a righteous thing for thee to get heaven, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

3. Winning Christ, we gain a treasure; the treasure hid in the field. Consider that whatever you can lose for Christ, if you win him, you win a treasure, when you lose but some small mite for it. Christ is a treasure for preciousness, everything in Christ is pre-

cious. When Solomon counted all that was in the world, he sets down the total in two great cyphers, vanity and vexation. And is this the prize for our sweat and cares? Why so eager on vanity, so fond of vexation. But all in Christ is precious. Is not grace, pardon, peace, precious? They were purchased with his precious blood, 1 Pet. i. 19; they are wrapped up in precious promises, 2 Pet. i. 4. O precious promises! where happiness is wrapt up in words and syllables. Eternity couched in a sentence! an eternal weight of glory in a word! Christ is also a treasure, for variety and abundance of precious things. The treasure of worldly things is soon counted. We have the inventory of it, consisting but of these three things, "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life." But it "hath pleased the Father, that in Christ should all fulness dwell." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath laid up for them that love him." I will only tell you of the following things in it. The whole constellation of graces, each more precious than gold, of more worth than a world. The whole privileges of the saints: an eternal weight of glory. *Finally*, the whole Trinity. Christ is also a treasure in respect of secrecy. Hid to the unrenewed world, and even to believers in a great measure. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." But even in glory, they will never see to the end of it.

4. Winning Christ, we gain that which will turn every thing to our advantage. "All things shall work together for our good." This is the stone that turns all to gold. If we be in Christ, death shall be profitable to us as an inlet to eternal bliss; the grave, a place of rest, as God's field, where the seed sown shall spring up with increase; the wind of afflictions shall drive us more speedily to our harbour; our crosses shall be for crucifying our lusts; our losses shall be our gain to bring an hundred-fold. Thus, in a word, all things shall work for our good.

5. Winning Christ, we gain an heirship. We "become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." More by far, than if we were heirs of the greatest monarch on earth. By this you will be heirs of the promises, young heirs of glory. Attended by angels, and duly provided for while in your minority, and at length admitted to your inheritance. Yea, all is yours.

6. There is nothing, then, which we have to lose for Christ, that is worthy to be laid in the balance with him. The loss is infinitely made up in him. What are our worldly goods, in comparison of

the goodness laid up for those that are in Christ. May not the relation to Christ and his Father make up all the loss of other relations? The glorious liberty of the sons of God, make up the loss of our liberty in the world; and an eternal life, our natural life.

Lastly, It is below the honour of God to let sinners be losers at his hand. He will not be behind with his creatures. They shall have good measure, pressed down and running over. "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.

Use 1. Of information. The worldly man is penny wise and pound foolish. "He strains at a gnat and swallows a camel." He will be loath to lose a sixpence, but he can let a talent of glory slip through his fingers. He watcheth a little gilded earth, lays it up securely, holds it fast in his hand, nay, in his heart; but he can let a crown, a kingdom, a heaven, a Christ go. Though it is difficult to beguile him in other things, he will be cheated out of these for a trifle, like a child. Esau was a cunning man, yet he was as easily cheated of the blessing as if he had been a fool or idiot.

2. In a time of giving out for Christ, they are not the greatest gainers that lose nothing for him. When the trial is over, and every one counts their winning, the greatest losers will be found the greatest gainers. The greatest outgiving has the greatest income, as in the parable of the talents. Alas! what is the winning of others, but that they have saved the shoe, but lost the foot; saved the cabinet, but lost the jewel; saved the body, but lost the soul; the world is gained, Christ is lost.

Use 2. Of exhortation. "Buy the truth, and sell it not." Win Christ at any rate, lose him at no rate. Remember you cannot make too dear a purchase in this point. There are three cases in which I would have you to walk by this principle,

1. When sin comes to you, like Potiphar's wife to Joseph, and offers you deadly poison in a golden dish. Now Christ and a lust are in competition. Now here is a goodly price offered you for the Lord's favour and countenance; but sell it not, for all you can make by it will not clear the cost, but it will be bitterness in the end. Now you must have him at the rate of plucking out a right eye, yet buy the truth, assure yourself it is cheap enough of all.

2. When sloth comes to you, as Peter to Christ, covering a sharp sword with words softer than oil, saying, "Master, spare thyself," what needs all this trouble about religion? What needs such bitter repenting, wrestling in prayer, watching over heart and life?

What needs this exposing yourself for a sermon? Now sloth and Christ are come in competition. Here is a goodly price for Christ, a sound sleep on the sinner's soft bed, a way strewed with roses, pleasant carnal company, and a warm fireside; but sell it not so cheap: all that is not worth one smile of his face: nay, of one check from him: Take him, though at the rate of the most exquisite diligence, the most painful exercise, most difficult and grating to the flesh, and cheap enough.

3. When the enemies of Christ and his work come to you, as the chief priests to Judas, offering you thirty pieces if you will betray him; and when you are put to loss in his cause, say, like Judas to the honest woman that bestowed a box of ointment on Christ, "What needs all this waste?" Now Christ and the world are in competition. Here is a goodly price for Christ. You may keep what you have, and also get more; you shall get the world's smiles, if you will venture on his frowns. Let them guide God's house as they will, and you shall dwell in ceiled houses. Take the mark of the beast in your foreheads, or in your hands, and you shall obtain leave to buy and sell. But sell him not. The world's offer is not worth the hearing; it is but dung for gold, counters for pearls. But in such a case you cannot have him, but at the expense of the world's countenance, loss of means, and perhaps liberty and life itself, but he cannot be too dear bought.

Motive. You will get all in Christ that you are seeking to win in the world, and more. If you would have a name, you shall get one, better than that of sons and daughters. Would you have honour? you shall have it. "Him that honoureth me," says God, "I will honour." Would you have gold? you shall have it. The very streets of heaven are paved with gold. Amen.

[Same subject continued.]

SERMON XIX.

Philippians iii 9,

And be found in him.

Here is another thing which the apostle hath in his eye, namely, to be found in Christ. This supposeth that they who win Christ are

in him, united to him, and that they who are united to him will be found in him, when God searcheth for them. Having before handled the doctrine of union with Christ, I shall only speak to this.

Doctrine. It should be men's great care, to provide that when God comes to search, they may be found in Christ. Here I shall,

I. Shew how, or when God comes to search, and the saints are found in Christ.

II. How and where they shall be found, that are found in Christ.

III. Give the reasons of the point, and then subjoin some improvement. I am then,

I. To shew how or when God comes to search, and the saints are found in Christ. This world is a confused heap, and many times the counterfeits are found among the jewels, undiscerned; but God hath searching times, in which he will search out men. "I will," says he, "search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled in their lees, that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil."

1. One searching time is, a time of plain searching, preaching of the word. The word is God's candle, which he kindles to let men see through their state and condition. "The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." God carries this candle through the man's spirit, and searcheth him thoroughly. Thus Paul tells us, that by such searching preaching "even an unbeliever, or unlearned man, is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." Now the false wares of the hypocrite appear naught, the mask is drawn off between God and their own consciences, Malachi iii. 1—3. But then the believer is found in Christ, for the word is never an enemy to the grace of the Spirit, "for he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

2. A time of temptation is a searching time. This is a sieve which Satan is allowed to manage for the discovery of the true grain. "Satan," said our Lord, to Peter, "hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat. Sometimes Satan is, as it were, let loose, and temptations abound, iniquity is established by law, and then good and bad are put to the trial. Then the light corn and chaff appear, being driven away before the wind; the world begins to wonder after the beast, stars fall. Then goes the earthly,

carnal-minded professor to the earth; the heady, unsettled, light professor, unstable as water, falls away; the proud, conceited professor appears as he is, like a tall barren tree. But then saints are found in Christ, sealed and safe; "for it is impossible to deceive the elect," Rev. vii. 1—3.

3. A season of the church's trouble, and of persecution for the gospel, is a searching time. A true friend is known in adversity. The stony ground receives the word and holds green, till the sun of persecution arise, and then it withereth. When Christ rides in triumph, many cry, Hosanna, who will afterwards cry, Crucify him. Many run after Christ in a day of peace, that will run as fast away from him in a day of trouble. This is God's sieve, with which he searcheth. They are brought to the waters of suffering, and then bowers down go away back. But the saints are now found in Christ, so that when "Israel is sifted as corn, not the least grain falls to the ground."

4. The time of death and judgment: this is the main thing, though not the only thing aimed at in the text. Possibly some may escape all the former searches, but none can escape this. Now the King indeed comes in to see the guests, and if there be but one hypocrite, he will instantly discover him. At present the corn and chaff are mixed, but then he will thoroughly purge his floor. Now foolish and wise virgins cannot easily be distinguished, but then it clearly appears who are wise and who are foolish. Now goats and sheep intermingle, but then they shall be for ever separated. Then the saints shall be found in Christ, and placed on his right hand. We now proceed,

II. To shew how and where they shall be found, that are found in Christ.

1. They shall be found in him, as branches in the true vine, John xv. 1—6. Being thus in him, they are in no hazard of the axe of God's wrath. Barren trees may, and shall be cut down for the fire; but Christ mystical is a tree which the axe may not, yea, cannot approach. "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day." The pruning-knife, indeed, may come to it, to cut off the twigs of corruption; but this, instead of injuring, will render it more fruitful. They are in no hazard of the wind, blow from what quarter it will. The wind of temptation and trouble may indeed shake, but cannot break nor remove the branches that are in Christ. They may be made by a violent blast to sweep the ground, but they will never be broken off.

2. They shall be found in a sanctuary, in a place of refuge.

"The Lord shall be for a sanctuary to them." They have fled to him for refuge, and so shall find shelter in the worst of times. "Come, my people," says he, "enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." When God came by a deluge to search the old world, he found them all eating and drinking; Noah only he found in the ark, and there he was safe. They who are in Christ, have laid hold on the horns of the altar: law and justice cannot drag them from it. They are within the city of refuge, where one drop of wrath cannot fall.

3. They shall be found under a covert, and in a hiding-place. The man Jesus shall be to them as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. This is a covert of blood, the Mediator's blood, under which the guilty creature may sit safely, and abide the search of a holy God; for he sits there, clothed with an everlasting righteousnes, a white raiment, in which omniscience can see no spot. When God searcheth for the guilty creature, but finds him here, "then he is gracious to him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." There is blood sprinkled on the door-post where this man is, and therefore the destroying angel must pass by.

4. They shall be found in the covenant, in Christ's chariot, which is a safe place, Song iii. 9, 10; and so they shall be treated as God's own friends, even when he comes to render vengeance to his enemies, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. We are now,

III. To give the reasons of the point.

I. God will search and find out every one of us, be where we will. "The King will come in to see the guests." We may sit at ease a while, but we must lay our account with a narrow search at last, which will try what metal we are of. There is no hiding from God. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Men may deceive themselves, and make a figure in their own eyes, when they are naught in the sight of the Lord. "But God is not, cannot be mocked." The world may be deceived, so that one limb of the devil may hate another, because he is so like a saint. The saints may be deceived, who may take them for full brethren, while they are not father's children. What if even hypocrites deceive the devil himself, in their religious fits, Jer. xvii. 9, 10; but God will find us out, "for he searcheth the reins and hearts, and will give unto every one according to his works."

2. If God find us, in this search, out of Christ, we are undone. We have nothing to shelter us, he will draw us out of our hiding-

places and lurking holes; take off our mask, and spue us out of his mouth. We will be put away like dross, driven as the chaff before the wind, set among the goats, and separated for ever to destruction. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved."

3. If we are found in Christ, we will be safe in time and eternity, blow the storm as it may. Temptations shall not totally carry us away, but we shall be born up against the stream. Troubles, though they get over our heads, yet we will find him "the lifter up of our heads," and we shall get safe on shore. When death comes, it shall be without its sting, seeing we are found in Christ; and at the day of judgment we shall be right hand men, because in him.

Use. Let it be your great care to be found in Christ. Our time is like to be a searching time of temptation and trouble; and though it should not, yet death and judgment are abiding us. What should we do to be carried through? Why, if you be found in Christ, as Noah in the ark, Lot in Zoar; you are in your chambers, "no evil shall befall you, nor plague come near your dwelling." Let not the searching time find you at a disadvantage; all those will be found so, who are in such a time,

1. Found in an unregenerate state, "dead in trespasses and sins, and without Christ." This is a dangerous and soul-ruining case to meet God in. God will find these men as Elijah found Ahab, "hast thou found me, O! mine enemy." Two cannot walk together except they be agreed; yet they may meet together, but surely there will be sad work when they meet. Dreadful will the meeting be, betwixt God and his enemies. When these meet, a consuming fire and dry stubble meet; a judge and a criminal. The Judge will say, "those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

2. Be not found with the sluggard, in your bed. Be not secure, as God found the old world. It is like that God will set fire into the nests of this generation, it were good to leave them in time, and shake off security; "to have our loins girt, and lamps burning." It was a sad case with Jonah, when he was drawn out of a sound sleep, and cast into a raging sea. It is awful to feel calamities, ere we fear they are coming.

3. Be not found, as death finds the wicked, in the embraces of your lusts. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." The Philistines found Samson just risen out of Delilah's lap, without his hair. The soft embraces of our idols do but make way for severe strokes from the hand of God. It is difficult to conceive how a man may just make but a skip of it from the enjoyment of his lusts into

Abraham's bosom. Nay, rather, God will take these filthy garments, cover them with brimstone, and set them on fire about men's ears.

4. Be not found, like Saul, hid among the stuff. "Lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset you." The world is like a long garment, which entangles a man, and unfits him to run and flee from the wrath to come. The rich man, who was thinking of nothing but full barns, and goods laid up for many years, was in a sad case when God found him out. Sit loose, then, to the world, if ever you would meet comfortably with God in the way of his judgments, here or hereafter.

Lastly, Be not found in the devil's camp, among ill company. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." Lot's sons-in-law might have escaped, if they would but have left their ill company in Sodom, Gen. xix. 14, 15. Better go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting; the house of trembling, than of riot. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." But if you would abide the search here or hereafter, then be found in Christ.

1. Be found to be in him, united to him, by his Spirit and by faith. No storm can blow down those who are built upon this rock; neither will Christ lose a member of his body, in time or eternity. He is the true ark and refuge, "none perish that trust in him."

2. Be found walking in him. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Walking with him, before him, after his example, "walking even as he also walked." This is to walk in the way of holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord."

Finally, Be found living in him, and upon him, Gal. ii. 20. Those that live in and by themselves will wither, when the trees planted in God's house will be flourishing.

MOTIVES, to urge you to make it your main business to be found in Christ, when God shall search for you in time and eternity:—

1. If you be found in Christ, he will be found in you, so shall you have a double security in a time of trial; for it is a mutual inbeing, John xvii. 21—23. He will be found in believers, as in his own house and lodging. Christ hath two lodgings: one in heaven. "He inhabiteth eternity, and dwells in the high and holy place." He hath another on earth, the believer's heart. "For he dwells with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Christ hath bought both, and he made a journey to take possession of the house in heaven for us, Heb. vi. 20; and it is our own house, because it is

his. "It is our house, which is from heaven." And he comes to the sinner's heart, to take possession of it for himself, and when they open to him by faith, he comes in and dwells, Rev. iii. 20. This will be a grand security. A man will always take care of his own house, especially in a storm, that the winds do not unroof it, or the rains waste it.

Christ will be found in you, as in his banqueting-house. The Pharisees wondered that he was a guest to sinners; and the world will not believe it, because they cannot see it. God's own children often say, how can these things be? Will he come into such a poor house to be entertained, where there is little or nothing with which to entertain him? They do not consider that Christ brings the provision with him. He is such a guest as Elijah was to the poor widow in a time of dearth, and feasts them in a time of the greatest trouble. "In the world," says he, "ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world; in me ye shall have peace."

He will be found in you, in his fortified house, as a conqueror. The first thing David did, after he received the kingdom, was to take the stronghold of Zion, which was so well fortified against him, that they thought the blind and the lame could hold it out, 2 Sam. v. 6, 7. So Christ, being anointed king, sets himself to recover the hearts of the elect, held out against him as a stronghold, by a blind understanding, and a lame and crooked will. "But he pulls down the strongholds, and casts down imaginations;" and having brought all to obedience, he comes in to hold it for himself. Now here is another security. Will he quit his conquest? No. "I give unto them" says he, "eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

4. His temple house, as the God of the temple. Believers are his temple; as the King of Glory, he hath come in, to dwell in their souls for ever. The soul that was a chapel for the devil, becomes the temple of Christ. There are sacrifices. They offer themselves to the Lord; their graces as incense, and he is the altar that sanctifies the gift. Another security; they shall be under special protection. "His eyes and his heart shall be on them perpetually." He will see to it, that the temple shall not be polluted; and though it should be laid in rubbish in a grave, it shall be gloriously rebuilt.

5. His garden. "I am come," says he, "into my garden, my sister, my spouse." They are a garden of spices, in which the precious plants of grace grow. This is another security. "He will water it every moment," hedge it about and preserve them, as a

man doth his garden, while his other fields are exposed, Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

6. As a child in the mother's womb. "My little children," says Paul, "of whom I travail, as in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." "Christ is in them the hope of glory." This is another security. The mother cannot be executed in law, while she is with child, for that would be the death of two, whereas her life only is exposed.

Lastly, As the soul is in the body, Christ is their very life; he lives in them, Col. iii. 4; Gal. ii. 20; Acts ii. 25—27.

MOTIVE 2. If you be not found in Christ, you will be found in a bad case in time and eternity; in a trying time in this life, and in another world. You will be found as under the curse: laid open to the wrath of God, as the chaff to be driven away with the wind.

[Same subject continued.]

SERMON XX.

PHILIPPIANS, iii. 9,

Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God, by faith.

IN these words, the apostle describes the righteousness in which he desires to be found and to compear before God, and this is the righteousness of Christ. It is not our own, for to our own he opposeth it. It is not our faith, for it is through and by faith. But it is the righteousness of Christ, through the faith that hath him for its object. The righteousness received by faith.

DOCTRINE. Christ's righteousness, received by faith, is the sinner's only security to be depended upon before God. It is the sinner's only shield, shelter and defence, from the wrath of God. Here I shall,

I. Shew what is meant by Christ's righteousness.

II. How it is received by faith.

III. Confirm the doctrine. I am,

I. To shew what is meant by Christ's righteousness, which is the

sinner's only shield. Righteousness is the result of obedience to the law. He who satisfies the law is righteous, and this shelters from wrath. The great thing that stands between God and a sinner is a broken law; and while God is, it will be an effectual bar to keep sinners out of heaven, to which the sinner can never come but with the good leave of the holy law, it being once satisfied. For this cause, seeing sinners could not satisfy the law for themselves, Christ undertook to do it for them. Accordingly, he fulfilled it, and by his fulfilling it, comes this righteousness which is the believer's security. Now Christ fulfilled the law in our room,

1. By his active obedience to its commands; perfect obedience to all the commands. This no mere man since the fall could do, yet it is that without which no man can be saved. It is a debt which must be paid for every one, either by themselves, or by their surety. The law saith to all the children of men, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" that is, keep them perfectly. Alas! then, must all perish? No. Christ answered for his own. What they could not do, he did. Now the law's demands of the sinner were very high.

Demand 1. Thy nature must be absolutely pure and spotless: for if the fountain be poisoned, how can the streams be wholesome. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Alas! the sinner can never answer this. He hath a corrupted nature, and he cannot purify it. "Who can say I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin." He was born in sin; he cannot get into his mother's belly, and be born over again without sin. Well, Christ satisfies this demand for his people, the law shall have all its asking; therefore the Son of God takes to himself a true body and a soul, both sinless. The ancient of days becomes an infant of days; he is conceived without spot, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and in due time born without sin. For as he was in his life, so was he in his birth, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners." His nature was not in the least tainted, but absolutely free of the least seed of sin. Here is now such a birth, such a nature as the law sought, so that demand is answered, that bar in the sinner's way is taken out; but the law has other demands.

Demand 2. Thou must give obedience to every command. Thy obedience must be as broad as the law. One hair's breadth lacking, thou shalt never see heaven. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." Alas! what shall the sinner do with this; there are many of these commands which he doth not know, how shall he obey them. Many quite against his nature, as "love your enemies." Many

that, were his life a thousand times lying on them, and he would set himself to the utmost watchfulness, he will often break; such as vain thoughts, and impure desires.

Christ hath answered this demand. "He fulfilled all righteousness." "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He made the law, he could not then but know every part of it; and he fulfilled it in every iota. He gave external and internal obedience; obedience in heart and life. Its hardest commands he opposed not; loved his enemies and denied himself; not a vain word ever dropt from his mouth, nor a vain thought ever entered his heart.

Demand 3. Every part of thy obedience must be raised up to the highest degree and pitch the law requires. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." It is not enough that thou be sincere, and desire to do better, and be sorry thou canst not. Alas! the sinner can never answer this, he shall as soon reach the clouds. Let him do his best, corruption holds him down, so as he can never reach the top. If he be praying ever so fervently, there is always some coldrifeness in the heart. In his purest intentions, self-will insinuates itself.

Christ answered this demand. His love to his Father was more than seraphic. It was most ardent love. His love to men was incomparable, and went to the utmost bound of love. "For greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; but he laid down his life for his enemies." Every one of his actions was absolutely spotless and perfectly refined, without the least mixture of imperfection.

Demand 4. All this must be continued to the end, without the least failure in one iota, Gal. iii. 10. If thou shouldest all thy days live sinless, and at the hour of death a vain thought run through thy mind, all is gone. Alas! how impossible is this! The sinner cannot keep perfectly right one year, day, hour, minute, if a thousand hells were in it.

But Christ satisfied this demand. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The first Adam made a fair outset, but he soon halted. The second continued to the end. The law could never catch him in the least sin from his cradle to his grave, by day or night, alone or in company. His heart and life shone in holiness in its meridian brightness, without the least cloud or spot, while his day lasted. So all these bars are removed by his active obedience. He fulfilled the law also,

2. By his passive obedience. When all these demands are answered, the law has another word with the sinner, ere he can enter within the gates of the city, and that is, taking sure hold of him, it

says, "Pay what thou owest." Thou art in debt to the justice of God, for the sins already committed. Thou must satisfy the threatenings of the law, and bear the curse and vengeance thyself, or find a surety. O! then, "will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" No. These are all too mean to satisfy here. But, O! ye crowned heads, and mighty monarchs of the world, may not you be cautioners for the debt? No, they cannot, if they would sell their crowns, kingdoms, and dig up all the gold in the world, and lay it down, it would not pay their own debt; but they themselves must have a cautioner, or they are ruined. O ye mighty angels! may not you rather undertake for this debt, than that your fellow-creatures should perish? They cannot. They are not able. They would be bankrupt with the payment of the thousandth part, and ruined for ever; and it would never be paid for them. O high demands indeed! that no creature in heaven or earth can answer. Then said the Mediator, "Lo, I come," Psal. xl. 7. What are thy demands?

Demand 1. Sinner, thou must suffer, thou must die the death, for the word is gone out of the Lord's mouth, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Alas! how shall this be answered? For if the sinner's life go for it, what hath he more? And if death once get him down, it will hold him down for ever. O! may not bearing crosses do it? No, the law must be satisfied with bearing curses, not crosses. O! may not tears for sin, bitter mourning, do it? No, it is shedding of blood, not pouring out of water, that the law must have. Without this, no remission of sin. But Christ satisfies this demand. It shall have all its asking. He puts himself to the sword of justice. Armed death falls upon him, sheds his precious blood, wounds him to the heart, separates soul and body, carries him away prisoner to the grave, and he is laid in the dust of death. Death gave him the first fall, but because he was God, he riseth again; and death having got his due, he brings away the keys of hell and death with him, that never one of his may be prisoner there.

Demand 2. Thy sufferings must be universal in the whole man, for so hath thy sinning been. That body of thine, the instrument of sin, must suffer. That head, that hath contrived so much mischief, must be wounded; that heart, that has been the spring of all, must be pierced; these feet, which have carried thee so often to sin, and these hands, that have wrought so much iniquity, must also be pierced. And that soul of thine must also suffer principally, as

being the chief actor of all thou hast done against God. Ah! how shall we bear it? Who can endure this, which is a thousand deaths in one? Christ satisfies this demand also. He suffers in his body. His head was crowned and pierced with thorns. "His heart was melted like wax in the midst of his bowels." "His feet and hands were pierced." "His tongue did cleave to his jaws." "His bones were all out of joint." His body had nothing to cover it but shame, and his strength was dried up like a potsherd. The wrath of God fell on his soul. It was troubled, sore amazed, and agonized. The arrows dipped in the curse were shot against it, till the law had no more to require.

Demand 3. Thy sufferings must be most exquisite; thou shalt have no pity, no sparing, but judgment without mercy, Deut. xxix. 20. Ah! who can satisfy this? "Who can dwell with devouring fire?" "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Christ satisfies this too. "God spares him not, but delivers him up to the death for us all." Though his body was of a most refined temperature, and so his senses most exquisite, his death was of the most tormenting kind. His eyes were denied the light of the sun, his ears heard their cruel mockings, and he got vinegar to drink. He was in travailing pangs, and soul travail. No help had he in it. Men nor angels did not help him, and he died in it.

Demand. 4. Thy sufferings must be infinite, for it is infinite justice that thou hast offended. Ah! who can bear this? This is killing; saddest of all, a thousand times. Universal, exquisite; yet infinite, ever to endure, never to end. "Who can abide with everlasting burnings?" This is the hell of hells, and beyond the reach of a creature, a finite being. But Christ answers this too. He is God, therefore an infinite one; so his sufferings, though not infinite in duration, yet infinite in value, fully answering the demands of the law.

Last Demand. Thy sufferings must be voluntary, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering. If thou murmur in the least, under all thy sufferings, it is new sin; a blemish in the sacrifice, which prevents its acceptance. Ah! who can do this? The weight of wrath makes the devils and the damned roar against God. A man can scarcely bear a fit of the gout or gravel, or even a sharp pain of any kind, but with some impatience. But Christ satisfies this too. "When he was oppressed and afflicted, he opened not his mouth." In all his sufferings, he never had the least wrong thought of God rising in his heart, Psal. xxii. 1—3. Never the least murmuring or fretting. He willingly underwent what he was to suffer. He did not flee when his hour came. He prayed for his enemies, his mur-

derers, in the very extremity of his sufferings, in a meek and loving manner, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Let us,

II. Shew how this righteousness is received by faith. It is received and becomes ours by faith, as faith unites us to Christ. Upon this union, follows a communion with Christ in his righteousness; so Christ being ours by faith, his righteousness is ours. The soul, by faith, marries with Christ, and the righteousness is its dowry. The soul flies to Christ as the city of refuge, and that righteousness is their cover. We now proceed,

III. To confirm the doctrine.

1. That only can shelter us from the wrath of God which satisfies his law. Now this righteousness is the only thing which can satisfy his law, and it has done it fully. The law is magnified more by his obedience and sufferings than if all the elect had gone to hell for it. The law being obeyed, and executed upon Christ, is more magnified than it could have been by them, and that because of the dignity of the person. Even as a king shews a greater respect to the law, by executing it on his own son, than upon a thousand common malefactors. They would have been ever satisfying, but never could have fully satisfied. By Christ it gets both active and passive obedience, by them only passive.

2. It is the righteousness of God. It is so called, because it is the righteousness of him who is God, Jer. xxiii. 6; therefore it is called, gold tried in the fire. Our gold is become dross, it will not abide the touchstone of the law, because imperfect, but Christ's righteousness will. Ours will not abide the fire of the judgment of the God of truth. Our obedience is not full measure, and, being weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, it will be found light.

It is the only righteousness accepted of God. "In whom," says he, "I am well pleased." It may be safely depended upon, for it is of infinite value. "Christ purchased the church with his own blood." It was the divine nature of Christ that made all his obedience so efficacious for the benefit of his people. What sins will not the blood of the Son of God purge away? "It cleanseth from all sin."

3. It is the righteousness contrived by the only wise God to save sinners, when nothing else could do it, Psal. xl. 6, 7. When there was no help among angels or men for them, he laid help on the Mediator, as one mighty to save. This was a contrivance becoming an infinite God. The mercy of God shines forth in it, finding an object in the deepest misery. To have given a deliverance from wrath, after millions of years, would have been great mercy; but

here is mercy, bringing the sinner from the lowest abyss of misery unto the highest pitch of happiness. Here, also, the justice of God shone gloriously. In the deluge, and the burning of Sodom, it appeared, but more here. It got all its demands. What are all creatures, to the Son of God suffering? The love of God was displayed. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." The Son willingly gave himself. Here is love, wonderful indeed in all its dimensions. Behold also the wisdom of God. The confused mass at the beginning was not comparable to the confusion at the fall. But truth met with mercy. Out of the sin that obscured the glory of God, is brought the greatest honour. The matter is so ordered, that man stands more firmly than under the first covenant. When the angels stood astonished, hell rejoiced at the fall. Man lay grovelling in the dust of misery, wisdom found out a way for restoring them to happiness.

Use 1. Never entertain low thoughts of sin. It is the worst of evils, which could not be remedied, but by the sufferings of Christ. It brings a heavy burden on a sinner that bears his own burdens. Behold it in the glass of Christ's sufferings, and you will think none of it little. Sin runs counter to the nature of God, and dishonours all his attributes. God is the chief good, sin the worst evil. The sinner dares God's justice, presumes on his mercy, mocks his patience, challengeth his power, despiseth his love, and invades his sovereignity. So Christ behoved to suffer the most extreme punishment, to honour his justice and glorify all his perfections.

Sin contradicts his will. The foolish contradicts the laws of infinite wisdom, casts off God's laws and make its own lusts laws, and, therefore, to blot out this dishonour, the Son is made a sacrifice.

When God had perfected the frame of the world, and it remained only that he should have his tribute of glory paid to him out of it, sin gave a rude shock to the whole work, shook the whole frame; therefore was there such dreadful work to repair it, the Mediator suffering, rocks rending, the sun not shining, &c.

Use 2. Never entertain low thoughts of pardon. Every pardon is the price of blood, more precious than a thousand worlds. Pardoning sin is one of the greatest letters of God's name, one of the greatest of his works, greater than to make a world. When God said, let such a thing be, it was. But when sin is to be pardoned, justice stands up for satisfaction; the truth of God for the honour of a broken law. Wisdom is set to work to find out a way, the Son pays down the price of his blood, Num. xiv. 17—19.

Use 3. Come to Christ for shelter under his righteousness, that you may be justified, pardoned, and accepted. Consider there is no

other way but this to the divine favour, no shelter from the sting of unpardoned guilt but here. All other will be but fig-leaf covers.

Is not pardon of sin, and acceptance with God, worth the seeking? It makes a man happy, Psal. xxxii. 1. A man may be rich and yet reprobate, great in this world and yet damned in the next. His portion fat, yet his soul lean. But a justified man is a happy man. Worldly things come from God's hand, but this great blessing from his heart. It will be sweet sauce to the bitterest dish; it will cause you to glory even in tribulation. The righteousness of Christ justifies a man, and this makes every bitter water sweet. "For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"

And if you would give evidence of your interest in imputed righteousness, you must do it by inherent righteousness. Shew your faith by your works. Faith without works is dead, being alone. Amen.

MAN'S INIQUITIES TESTIFYING AGAINST HIM.

SERMON XXI.

JEREMIAH xiv. 7,

O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

IN the preceding part of the chapter, there is mournful narration of a sad state in which the land was, by reason of a famine. National sins bring on national judgments. In the words of the text, the prophet prays for the removal of the judgment. In the text we have four things.

1. A concession. "Though our iniquities testify against us." He grants that their iniquities, which brought on the judgment and kept it on, did testify against them; or, as the Hebrew, answered against them. We have the same phrase, Isaiah iii. 9, and lix. 12. It is a metaphor taken from judicatories, in which witnesses being in a process, and questions being put to them, they answer, and testify against the guilty. Sin, as the devil, first tempts, then accuseth. When they came to make their address to God, they found their sins at their right, witnessing against them.

2. A petition. "Do thou it." Take pity upon us, and relieve us; arise for our help and our relief. They do not condescend upon the particular thing which they would have him to do for their relief. He knew many ways to bring it about; the prophet, therefore, would limit him to no particular way, for beggars should not be choosers, and soveregnty must be allowed a latitude.

3. We have their plea for mercy. "For thy name's sake." By this they acknowledge the truth of the testimony given in against them by their sins, and justify God in his proceeding against them. They acknowledge their own unworthiness of his favour. By the name of God, is understood God himself. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "Help us," says the Psalmist, "O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." These last words, you see, superadds this, namely, as he hath manifested himself to his people. The phrase seems to include a respect to a final cause, and that with respect to his attributes, Exod. xxxiv. 5—7, and so they plead for the manifestation of his own glory, the glory of his grace and mercy, that he would do it for them. Joshua pleads thus, when their enemies were like to overcome them, "And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" And this is the advantage of the people of God, that his glory is joined with their interests; and particularly as to the judgment of famine. See Ezekiel xxxvi. 30, compared with ver. 32, where it appears that the glory of God suffered through their reproach. There is in this plea, also, a respect to a meritorious cause, which is none else but Messiah, Christ; of whom the Lord says his name is in him, Exod. xxiii. 21, and in whom his glory shines, 2 Cor. iv. 6. We must not think the prophet here addresseth himself to God, absolutely considered; for his majesty would dazzle and confound the eyes of the holiest on earth; but, even under the Old Testament, they directed their prayers towards the temple as a type of Christ, Psal. v. 7; and they very well knew that the glory of his name, which they urged in prayer, behoved to shine through the Messiah.

4. A confession. The prophet confesseth, in the name of the church, backsliding; a grievous sin, a returning to sin after vows, engagements, and resolutions against it; and after beginnings of a reformation. Yea, that these backslidings were many. They had often gone back in many points; and, adds he, "have sinned against thee," where the emphasis lies on the word *thee*. As when David says, "against thee; thee only, have I sinned." They

had lifted up themselves against the sovereign Lord of heaven; even against thee, to whom we must now come for help in our affliction. It comes in as a reason, "for we have sinned against thee;" intimating that they had no hope but in his name; and if that would not do, their case was desperate. But withal, it lays out before the Lord their deep sinfulness, as that whereby his name might be rendered illustrious, in coming over all their many backslidings.

Doctrine. That though the iniquities of the people of God, when they are awakened, do testify against them; yet it is their duty and disposition to hold on in their suit, pleading with him for a gracious answer for his own name's sake. Or,

Though the people of God find their iniquities testify against them in their addresses to God; yet they must and will hold on their suit, improving God's own name's sake as their only plea for a favourable answer. Here I shall,

I. Shew what it is for a man to find his iniquities testify against him in his addresses to God.

II. How comes it that sin is found thus testifying against men.

III. I will speak a little to the plea, "For thy name's sake." We are then,

I. To shew what it is for a man to find his iniquities testify against him in his addresses to God. Take these reflections upon it:—

1. Sin is not dead when it is committed. Though it may be buried and out of mind for a time, yet it is buried quick, and lives to be a witness before the Lord, against the sinner. The act is transient, but the guilt is of a permanent nature. "If thou doest not well," said God to Cain, "sin lieth at the door." Lieth as a sleeping mastiff at the door, which will, ere long, awaken. "I will reprove thee," says God to the sinner, "and set them, (thy sins,) in order before thine eyes."

2. When the man draws near to God in the exercise of his worship, sin meets him there; appears to him as a terrible ghost. So it is in the text, Isa. lix. 11—13. Many times the Christian's sin, which was before out of his sight, meets with him before the throne of grace. When the soul draws nigh to God, the brightness of his glory makes their spots to appear. "Woe is me!" said Isaiah, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Former sins then come to mind, which makes David say, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." Present sinfulness is then also ready to stare the man in the face.

3. Sin testifies two things for God against the man. *First*, their sins witness their unworthiness of any favour from the Lord, and makes them say, with the centurion, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof." And with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." Sins also testify against men their liableness to punishment, yea, to a curse instead of a blessing, so that the soul is often made to fear some remarkable judgment; for a guilty conscience is a terrible companion in the presence of a holy God. When sin gives in such a testimony, no wonder they stand trembling, fearing to hear the doom pronounced next.

4. This witness is convincing. So, in the text, we find the panel denies not the testimony, but pleads for mercy. Sin, testifying against the man before the Lord, stops the sinner's mouth. "I acknowledge my transgressions," says David, "and my sin is ever before me." A man may shift the conviction of others, and deny their testimony; but here, himself is both the guilty person, the accuser, and the witness.

5. Upon this, the gracious soul is filled with holy shame, and self-loathing. The person says, with Ezra, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass grown up unto the heavens." So the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Now his sin has found him out; and as a thief is ashamed when his crime is discovered, so is that soul; and this holy shame is vented by confession, self-judging, self-condemning, and self-abhorring. Then he hath a difficulty to get a name to express sufficiently his own vileness, and then he is the chief of sinners in his own esteem.

Lastly, He is damped, and his confidence before the Lord is marred as to any access to him, or obtaining favour at his hand. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." When the man lived near God, he had boldness and access with confidence unto the Father; but now his backslidings stare him in the face, and it is much if he be not quite overcome, and made to say, "my hope and strength is perished from the Lord." Then faith has difficulties indeed to grapple with, which may make it stagger; but then the soul must fall to the plea, "for his own name's sake." I now proceed,

II. To shew how comes it, that sin is found thus testifying against men.

1. It flows from the nature of sin and guilt upon an enlightened conscience. God hath said, "But if ye will not do so, behold ye have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out." Conscience is a tender part, and when it has light it cannot but testify against the man, when he appears in the presence of an offended God. The conscience of some is seared, and so they find nothing of this testimony; but sin will lie down in the grave with them; and awake when they awake.

2. It is a punishment from the Lord for former backslidings and miscarriages. Sin that is sweet in the mouth, is hereby often made bitter in the belly Confidence with God is no small mercy, and the want of it can be no small judgment to them that know the happiness of such a case.

Lastly, God so orders it, that it may be a mean to humble them, and make them more watchful against sin for the time to come. Then the Lord says to them, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts." "What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." By these, the soul is brought to repenting Israel's resolution. "I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now." And the bankrupts resolve, in the Lord's strength, that if they had their stock recovered again, they will look better to it.

III. I shall speak a little to the plea. "For thy name's sake."

I told you in the explanation, that it imports two things:

1. That we must plead with him for his Christ's sake; and when guilt stares us in the face, we must look to God through the vail of Christ's flesh. A guilty conscience presents to the sinner a God armed with vengeance. It is then the wisdom of the sinner to desire, Exod. xx. 18, 19. When the avenger of blood pursues, let us flee to the city of refuge; and when we are to appear before the Lord, we must embrace Christ in the arms of faith. It was the custom of the Molossians, when they were to seek a favour of their prince, they took up his son in their arms. This is the way in the court of heaven. This is a safe and sure way, for in him the father is well pleased, and we shall be accepted in the beloved.

2. We must plead with him for his glory's sake. Punishing of sin glorifies God much, but pardoning of sin glorifies him more. He is tender of his own glory, and so should we. So our Lord teaches us to pray, "for thine is the glory." When God hears, the benefit redounds to us, the glory to him; and so we are to make use

1. Plead the sufferings of Christ, and his satisfaction to justice. Plead the sufficiency of his merit, whereby he is able to save to the uttermost; the design of his sufferings to save sinners, and even the chief of sinners; the fruit of his sufferings; and cast yourself on Christ, resolved, if you perish, to perish at his footstool, and there will be no fear. Here you will get an answer to all the objections that conscience and the law can form against you.

2. Plead free grace and mercy, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. The sun shines without hire, and God is gracious to sinners, because he will be gracious. Are our sins great, grace will be the more magnified in pardoning them. Wherefore is free grace manifested, but to be communicated? Depth of misery is the most fit object for exceeding riches of grace. This pleading is very acceptable to God. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."

Plead the glory of his name in the world, Joshua vii. 9. You are called by his name. Without his help you cannot stand; and if you fall, his name will be dishonoured. If you get access to him, and communion with him, you shall live. If he send down the influences of his Spirit, you shall bring forth much fruit, and this will tend to his glory, John xv. 8. If he deny his influences, you will be withered creatures, and so God will be dishonoured.

Lastly, Plead his word. Say, "Lord, thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." All men are liars, but he is faithful and cannot deny himself. Get hold of a promise, and in time of need bring it forth, as Tamar did Judah's signet, &c., Gen. xxxviii. 25. This was Jacob's way, "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." O! but I fear the promises belong not to me. ANSWER. Lay thou hold on Christ as he is freely offered, and then be sure all the promises are thine, for they all meet in him. Amen.

Ettrick, Fast before the Sacrament, June, 1712.

THE UNEQUALITY OF MAN'S WAYS.

SERMON XXII.

EZEKIEL xviii. 29,

Are not your ways unequal?

MEN may be under the deepest affliction, and yet far from true humiliation. A stone broken in a thousand pieces, each piece is a stone. A hard heart, untouched by the grace of God, will be an unhumbled heart, under the severest affliction. Here is a people, some of them captives in Babylon, some of them in hard circumstances in their own land; both groaning under affliction, but not to God, but against God. Let not people wish the evil day, upon the assurance that it will humble the generation. If hell were opened to flash out on the faces of a graceless generation; if the fire of the Spirit do not withal melt their hearts, "the bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away." They will quarrel God's ways as unequal, as if they deserved not the punishments inflicted upon them; while in the meantime it may be justly retorted on them, as in the text, "Are not your ways unequal?"

The words are a solemn appeal made by God himself to this people themselves, touching their way and manner of life. Consider here,

1. The antagonists, even God, and his own people, on whom he had heaped benefits and privileges, and who had made to him repeated professions of duty; and here God being the complainer, and they defenders, there is no doubt they must lose the cause.

2. The crime libelled against them; the unequality of their ways. They had the impudence to charge God with unequalness in his ways; as if he had punished them for that of which they were not guilty. The Lord clears himself, vers. 26—28; then he retorts the charge upon themselves, that their ways were unequal. The word signifies such an inequality as there is betwixt two things that are weighed; but the one cannot balance the other, there is no proportion or equality betwixt them; so their ways in which they walked with God, their carriage and behaviour to him, was most unequal and unevenly. Unequal among themselves, unequal in respect of his ways towards them; so that bring the balance from heaven or from

earth by which their actions should be weighed, they would be found light, unequal, disagreeable and disproportionable. Well then might he say, "talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." And this charge is made on all and every one of their ways, as is the import of the singular number joined with the plural, in the Hebrew text; as if he had said, take every one of them, weigh them one by one, with my dealings with you, or with one another, you shall find them a confused disorderly mass; the whole thread of your life nothing but outs and ins, the whole of your conversation a rabble of inequalities.

3. The bar to which God brings this plea: it is that of their own consciences, whose tribunal was within their own breasts. Here God condescends to plead his cause against the criminals, where they themselves should be both judge and parties; being assured that though their corruptions did pass sentence in their favours, yet their consciences would reverse that sentence, and oblige them, out of their own mouths, to pronounce themselves guilty. In such a matter, where conscience is made judge, the sinner must lose the cause.

This is a day in which conscience should be set on a tribunal, and each of us should sist ourselves before it, to have our cause there judged. There are two things call for this, this day.

I. God seems to be mounting his throne for judgment this day; and the dispensations of the day towards us, and our Protestant churches, seem to sound that alarm of the judge's coming. "For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall discover her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." Providence appears to be whetting the glittering sword, and his arm to take hold on vengeance. It is time for us now to be going inward into our own breasts, as Isa. vi. 1—5. We have three sad tokens of God's mounting his throne:

1. The posts of the temple door with us are moved, as Isa. vi. 4. By this was signified the pulling down of the door, and exposing the temple to the profane, Amos ix. 1. And is not that this day fulfilled before our eyes, by that most unbounded toleration now set on foot in this Church, under the shadow of which the vilest errors and blasphemies may set up their heads; and men on whom the door of our temple was most justly shut, may now come in with their profane lives, erroneous preaching, and superstitious worship; and others must come in by the door of a patron's presentation, a door of which there was no pattern shewn in the mount; while that which Christ himself appointed, the call of the Church, is broken

down; and it is just with God that it should be so, seeing, in the best times of this Church, it was never freely opened.

2. Our house is also filled with smoke, which is a token of anger, Psal. xviii. 8. Some have been long looking for the mountain of the ministry to fall a burning, though former experience has shewn that to be a forerunner of all being cast into the sea. And some have been, like Samson's foxes, going through this Church with their firebrands, to set all in a flame; but now, alas! that spark is cast in which has already filled the house with such smoke of contention as will break forth at length into a flame of division, to the rending of this poor Church, if God in mercy prevent not.

3. Our prophets mostly seem to be sent out with a heavy message, as Isa. vi. 9, 10. The generation, in spite of gospel light, is still growing worse and worse; and the more our wounds are handled, the more they corrupt and stink. And, truly, the preaching of the word seems, for this long time, to have been followed with a judicial obduration; as if their meat had been laid before them, to fit them for the slaughter.

Therefore set conscience on the tribunal beforehand, and let it impartially judge your hearts and lives, that you may get wrongs righted before the decree bring forth.

II. God is ascending a throne of mercy among us. We are to see in this place, in a solemn manner, God in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and possibly it may be the last which we may have of that sort, till from the throne of judgment there come forth thunderings, lightnings and voices, which may rend the hearts of those whom the still small voice from the mercy-seat cannot make to relent. Therefore set conscience beforehand on the tribunal, and let it make an impartial judgment of your state and case; for,

1. It is a day of pardons, and sealed pardons. But the malefactor must come with a sense of his crimes in his heart, a confession in his mouth, and the rope about his neck of self-condemnation.

2. It is a solemn marriage-day. But the bride must be taking farewell of her father's house, and her own people. She must be casting off her filthy rags, and putting on the wedding-garment. She must be considering what will please, and what will displease her husband; whether her heart be gained from all others or not; and whether or not she is every way pleased with the match; content to take him for better and worse, and to follow him whithersoever he goes; otherwise her heart will leap back, and the marriage be marred.

3. It is to be an exaltation day to sinners, in which they are to

be exalted to sit at Christ's table, to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and to have the covenant sealed; and therefore this must be a humiliation day, for it is the humble that are exalted indeed, and the soul that is most humble bids fairest for the highest seat at the feast. The soul that hath most of gospel heaviness for sin, is likely to receive most of the oil of gladness. They that now lie most deep in the dust, and have the most profound sense of their follies and vileness, are the most likely to be admitted, as the beloved disciple, to lean on Christ's bosom. Now, as we are to be helpers of your joy, we would also be helpers of your shame and sorrow this day.

Sinners, what think you of your ways? "Are not your ways unequal?" Throw away the false balances of a corrupt judgment, and of your self-conceit. You have weighed too long with them. Let us weigh our ways in the balance of the sanctuary.

I. Weigh your ways in the balance of your Christian privileges. God has exalted this land to heaven that way. He hath made our poor corner of the world a lightsome corner, with Bibles, sermons, Sabbaths, sacraments, and other ordinances. But do we look like a people thus privileged? "Are not our ways unequal?"

1. How unsuitable to the gospel are our conversations. "Only," says the apostle, "let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel." Do we look like the citizens of the New Jerusalem? Nay, instead of adorning the doctrines of the gospel by holy and heavenly lives, our unholiness and carnality, our irregular and ungospel-like walk, leaves a stain on the ways of God.

2. How little are our privileges valued and improved? It is seldom our case sends us to our Bibles. The treasure lies there by us, but we slight it, do not dig into it, but are poor, formal, lifeless creatures, in our reading, hearing, and other exercises. The preaching of the word is very little prized, Sabbaths by many are miserably misspent, and sacraments disregarded.

3. Where is the fruit of these things? There is no growth proportionable to our means of grace. The showers of gospel waterings have as little fruit following them in many, as the rain that falls on the rocks and sands, and at best, "the seed of an homer does but yield an ephah." And "are not our ways unequal?" No wonder the kingdom of God should be taken from us, and given to others, that would bring forth the fruits of it, and that that land should be left unploughed that doth so ill requit the pains of the husbandman.

II. Weigh our ways in the balance of our mercies, that should lead us to repentance. He is a good God to us. Good to our land, good to every one of us in particular. But how unequal are our re-

turns to our receipts? A shameful confounding disproportion may be found there.

1. How unequal are they to the sparing mercy God is giving us? He has spared our land, ourselves in particular, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. But we have been to him as a snake hid in a man's bosom, that sets itself to gnaw out his bowels. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." The more he spares, the more does sin grow, the higher do we run on in our accounts; which is like to bring it to that, that his eye will not pity, nor his hand spare us any more.

2. How unequal are our ways to the preventing mercies with which we have met. How often has the Lord prevented us, held us up by his hand when we were on the brink of ruin, falling into sin? But hath that made us more watchful? Have we not been ready to cast ourselves again into the same snare? Have we duly acknowledged our debt to God in that matter? He has prevented our danger by seasonable deliverances, general and particular: but though for the present it might have some impression on us, yet have we not, many of us, behaved as if we had been delivered to work iniquity?

3. How unequal to enriching mercies. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation." Every day we rise, providence bids us stoop, and take on our day's load of benefits. But if conscience be allowed to speak, it will tell us, that every day the Spirit of the Lord gets on a new load of provocations from us. God is drawing us to him by cords of love, and we drive him from us by our daily follies.

III. In the balance of our afflictions, by which God has been at so much pains with us. These are the means made use of to cut off our luxuriant branches, that we may bring forth fruit; to wean us from the world, and to make us heavenly. They are the brisk gale that should cause us make speedy way towards Immanuel's land. But alas!

I. Are not many made worse and worse by their afflictions. Instead of the peaceable fruits of righteousness, showers of troubles and crosses, falling on the cursed ground of an ill heart, bring forth the briars and thorns of murmuring, fretting against God. Such trials often put men on ill courses. The poverty of many often roots up their honesty. Trade decays, the land is impoverished, and the effect of it on many is, their spirits are embittered, that they can get no good of the gospel. They are like the children of Israel, "who hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and cruel bondage in Egypt." Are not your ways then unequal?

2. Do we not cleave to that from which God is trying to separate us by the wedge of affliction. God sees such a thing would ruin a person, if they should get their will, and therefore God drives the wedge to make a separation; but the more God pulls these from us, we draw the more violently. Gall and wormwood are laid on the world's breast, but the child sucks the more greedily. The cup of poision is put out of our reach, and yet we search for it the more diligently.

3. Where is the contempt of the world, the heavenly-mindedness, the soul's taking up its rest in God, delighting in him, taking him for all, and instead of all, rejoicing in him in all cases and conditions—the native fruits of sanctified afflictions? Nay, the bewitching world has invaded the professors of this day, taken us captive; so that when we are sought to a kingdom, we are lying hid among the stuff.

IV. In the balance of our engagements, purposes, and resolutions. The vows of God are upon us, the land is under covenants; each of us are under baptismal vows, many of us are under communion vows. Purposes and resolutions have been taken up under convictions and afflictions. Our vows have been very extensive, to the whole of the Christian life. They have been aimed at particulars in our way. But are our ways equal? Have not our engagements been like the green withs, our purposes as the corn on the housetop? Are we what we engaged and resolved to be? No, no.

1. Have we not returned to our vomit, and after vows made enquiry. These very particular lusts, of which we seemed once and again to have taken farewell, invite us to return, and we have been found again on the forbidden ground.

2. Does our unwatchful, careless walking, look like our engagements and purposes. Were we resolved to give all that scope to our hearts, lips and lives, that they have actually gotten? Did we purpose to be at so little pains to beware of temptation, as indeed we have been? No, but our ways are unequal. Our purposes high, our performances very far below them.

3. Does our omission of duties, prayer, reading the word, meditation, self-examination look like them? How easily are we put off these things?

V. In the balance of our profession. Alas! how wide are our practices from our principles. No man could gather from what we do, what we believe, there is such an inequality betwixt them.

1. How unequal are our ways to our profession of the great fundamental principles of religion, that we are all lost by nature, and must be renewed by grace. Are our ways equal? how is it, then,

that men live without dipping into the thoughts of that state, and inquiring whether they are converted or not. A heaven and hell. What means the profanity of many, the coldrifeness and formality of others, in the duties of religion.

2. How unequal to our professions of love to God and Christ. How comes this love of the world, so little care to please him, so little being affected with the dishonour done to him.

3. Our concern for his interest. If it be so, how comes it that there is so little sympathy with this bleeding, groaning Church? How is it there is so little wrestling at the throne of grace at this time?

Lastly, In the balance of your attainments, which you have sometimes had, if ever you knew ought of seriousness. Let us look on ourselves as we have been in some golden spots of our time. O! how unlike ourselves will we appear, unstable as water.

To conclude. Take this night a view of your ways. Behold them, how unequal they are to what God has done for you, and what you yourselves have done. And sure I am, you will see your hearts and lives a mass of monstrous deformities, which will be the way to true humiliation, which will prepare you for a communion day. Amen.

Presbyterial Exercise and Addition, Selkirk, March, 2, 1731.

DUTIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE.

SERMON XXIII.

EPHESIANS v. 33,

Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

THE apostle having, in several preceding verses, laid out the duties of husbands and wives severally; and having enforced them with most powerful argument, fit at once to convince the judgment and influence the affections; an argument utterly unknown to the heathen moralists, being taken from the mysterious part of Christianity, namely, from the spiritual marriage and state of the mysteri-

ous case between Christ as the husband, and the church as his spouse; doth here conclude that matter of the mutual duties of husband and wife, summing up the duties of both jointly, in the words of the text. In which we have,

I. The connection in the word *nevertheless*, πλην, I shall not trouble you with the variety of significations heaped on this little word, judging the splitting of the words of the Holy Ghost into many different senses, in many cases, rather to cast a vail over, than to clear the meaning. Only some take it here for an illative particle, signifying therefore, or so then. And thus the words are a conclusion formally drawn from all the preceding points advanced on this subject. As if he had said, since thus stands the case between man and wife, between Christ and the church, therefore it plainly follows, that every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself." The particle seems to be originally an exceptive preposition, as appears from Mark xii. 32, "there is none other πλην αυτου, but he, or besides him." Hence, being used absolutely, adverbially, or conjunctively, it naturally falls to be an adversative particle, signifying but, or nevertheless; as appears from Acts xxvii. 22, "no loss πλην, but of the ship." And it is confessed on all hands to be an adversative, only that adversative is said to signify illatively here, and Matth. xi. 22—24, and some few other places, on this ground, that the sense requires it. Indeed, if the sense did absolutely require it, it behoved to be admitted. But that it does not, as appears from our version of the places, keeping the proper signification, and making very good sense. That we find a proposition of such a nature, that it is fit to be inferred from what went before, will not prove that it is a formal consequence in the intention of the penman; nothing being more ordinary than such propositions made without any such view; therefore the ground advanced is not sufficient for affixing that new signification to that word.

We take it then adversatively, *but* or *nevertheless*, as 1 Cor. xi. 10, 11; so it serves to pass from the purpose last insisted upon, and to resume the former. Ths apostle having, upon occasion of discoursing on the relation of husband and wife, brought in the great gospel mystery of the mystical union betwixt Christ and believers, does hereby bring them back from that consideration of faith to the practice of moral duties, as better fitted by the the former for the latter. And so he guards them against that bias of corrupt human nature, by which it is apt to lose its concern for the practice of moral duty, in idle speculation of the mysteries of Christianity; whereas all these mysteries are in their native tendency practical, tending to the sanctification of the true believer of them. Thus far of the connection. Let us,

II. Attend to the purpose of the text. This is twofold,

1. One relating to husbands, binding their duty on them as such. "Let every one of you," &c. And here we have the subjects of this duty pointed out, and that two ways: 1. Generally, you, υμεις. I find some translators take this word for a nominative put absolutely, and here place the comma; reading thus, "therefore as to you also," By which means the word comprehends both the husbands and the wives. But the distribution immediately made of this *you*, in the words οἱ Καθ ἑνα, "you one by one," with the rest of the connection, seems to spoil this. We take it then to be meant immediately of the Ephesian husbands only. But since the Bible is the voice of God to every one to whom it comes, it is meant also mediately, of every husband to whom the Bible has come, or shall come, to the end of the world. God herein speaks to all of them generally, whether they be great or small, noble or ignoble. For whatever freedom some persons of distinction fancy themselves at in these matters, they will find themselves in the end to have been as fast bound by the divine order as the meanest. 2. Distributively. You in particular, or more literally, you one by one. The apostle thinks it not enough to speak this to them all in general, but addresses himself on this point, one by one. Men are apt to fancy themselves overlooked in a crowd, and even what is but said to all in general, is in effect said to none. Therefore, that none may think themselves passed over, he so directs his speech to every one in particular, as if he spoke to none but him.

Now these, "you, you one by one," are doubtless nominatives; but they have no agreeing verb here, for that which follows is of the singular number, and has a nominative of its own. They might either, then, be put absolutely or elliptically. To the last of these, the copulative Και, *also*, seems plainly to lead, looking back to what is said before, of Christ's loving his church; as if had said, but you also, one by one, do so. Love you also your wives. But this the apostle passeth for a more particular and forcible phrase immediately subjoined, "Let each one love his own wife."

The duty itself. One's loving his own wife so, even as himself. Here we may consider the substance of the duty; love, the grand duty of Christianity. So soft, sweet, and lovely a duty, that it argues a mighty depravation of human nature akin to devilism, that it can so hardly get access, and keep its ground among men; and the excellency of the heavenly state, that there is nothing breathed there but love. We have also the determination, or specification of this love by its peculiar object. It is conjugal love, the love of one's own wife, την εαυτου γυναικα. This is that species of love which of

right is incommunicable, and admits of no partner. The apostle has once and again urged it in the context, and you have heard it already explained. But here he brings it in again, partly the more to inculcate it as a necessary duty, and especially to teach us, that as love is the sum, or comprehensive duty of the whole law, so conjugal love is the sum, or comprehensive duty of the husband to the wife.

We have also the nature of this love, or qualities requisite to constitute it. One is to love his wife so, even as himself. These words I conceive not to run into one, as if he had said so as, but to point at two different things, namely, 1. The rule of this love, or explanatory cause of it. So, that is, as Christ loved the church; that is the Christian husband's pattern he must copy after in the love of his wife. The church had many faults and blemishes, yet he loved her. He loved her sincerely, purely and singularly; by all means seeking the good both of her soul and body, for which he exerted himself to the utmost. Even so should men love their wives, in a like manner; expressing that love, as much as may be, in their conduct. 2. The reason of this love, "even as himself." This cannot belong to the rule of it, as if the particle *as* was only a note of similitude pointing to the love of one's self, as a subordinate rule, to which one is to conform in the love of his wife; for in that sense one is to love every man as himself. But surely there is something here required peculiarly in favour of his wife; therefore it points to the reason of it, namely, that one is to love his wife because she is his other self, one flesh with him, or one body, 1 Cor. vi. 16.

The manner of binding this duty on men is remarkably particular. Let every one εκαστος, love his own wife. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. The apostle first addresses himself in this matter to all in general; secondly, he distributes them one by one, as addressed; and now, thirdly, in the very same sentence, comes in with another word, carrying the duty to every husband's door, every one love his wife, even as himself. This must sufficiently establish both the weight of the matter, the proneness of human nature to shuffle its neck out of the soft yoke, and the apostle's earnest desire to fix it, and closely to apply it to them.

2. Part of the purpose of the text is that relating to wives, binding their duty on them as such. "And the wife see that she reverence her husband." And in this we may consider,

The subject of this duty pointed out. The wife, ἡ γυνη. The word signifies, either simply a woman, as Matth. v. 28; or a wife,

as Matth. i. 20; even as the other word ανηρ, here used, signifies simply a man or a husband. But this makes no ambiguity, in regard that it is in relation the one to the other, they signify husband and wife; so that a man's γυνη is always a man's wife. Thus Tit. i. 6, μιᾶς γυναικος ανηρ, literally the man of one woman, is the husband of one wife. This is common style in the Old Testament, Gen. xvi. 3. Sarah gave Hagar to Abram her man for a woman, that is, husband-wife. By which phraseology, the holy language, in the very frame of it, bars all mixtures, but in the state of marriage; none being one's woman, in the language of the Holy Ghost, but his wife. Now here it is plain the words stand in relation the one to the other; so γυνη is the wife, the subject of the charge here given.

The subject is pointed out indefinitely, not that they are more ready than the husbands to perform their duty, or that the apostle was less concerned to bind it on them; but that since all relations are mutual, standing or falling together, this was indeed the natural way of expressing what remained. The wife indefinitely, as the husband also in the original, not her husband. But that is in effect, as if he had said, your wives, one by one; every one's wife in particular; for the reasons given in the former case. We have next,

The duty itself. She is to reverence her husband. Here is something new, which we had not before. The apostle had called wives to submit themselves, and be subject to their husbands, vers. 22—24. Here he points them to the principle that must be the spring of that their subjection if they would behave themselves as Christian women, that is, reverence of their husbands, φοβηται, *reverence.* The word in general signifies fear, being in itself indifferent to reverence or servile fear, 1 John iv. 18. But here, without question, the fear meant is reverence. A kind of fear joined with love, competent to inferiors towards superiors, and consequently to the wife, whose superior God has made the husband. The formal ground on which reverence proceeds, is superiority or super-eminency; the rays of which, as it were, reflected on the conscience, strike reverence. Hence our supreme reverence is due to God: "Holy and reverend is his name." But forasmuch as he has impressed of the image of his supremacy on some, even on all superiors, and particularly on husbands; on whomsoever he has impressed it, it challengeth a proportionable reverence from us. Therefore, that superiority and supremacy which God has impressed in the character of a husband, as a lineament of his own image and supremacy, 1 Cor. xi. 3, ought so to touch the conscience of the wife with awful regard to it, that she should fear to offend him, and be careful to honour

him, and behave respectfully to him in word and deed, 1 Peter iii. 2—6.

We have lastly the manner of binding this duty on wives. It is remarkably singular. And the wife *see* that she reverence her husband. (Greek,) and the wife that she reverence her husband. In this phraseology, there is something either wanting or redundant. Some take the phrase to be pleonastic, accounting ἵνα redundant, and to be neglected in a translation. But such a mere pleonism, without any emphasis, should, I think, be the very last refuge in the case of the words of the Holy Ghost, therefore I take the phrase, with others, to be elliptical. It is an observation of a late judicious writer, that ellipsis often makes the language strong and close. And I make no question, but such is the ellipsis here; which, though it must be supplied in a version, yet cannot be equalled by the supplied phrase, the imagining of the thing being lost. It is an ellipsis of affection, kindled by the subject-matter stopping, and then precipitating the course of the words. This is usual in the style of the Scripture, Mark xiv. 49, "but (it is unavoidable) that the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Mark v. 23, "(I pray thee), come and lay thy hands on her." Gen. xxvi. 7; Matth. xxv. 9; Rom. xi. 21, compare ver. 20. Thus here, "the wife (see) that she." &c. This elliptical phraseology supposeth the darting forth of the rays of super-eminency commanding reverence. This is also expressed by the Syriac, in an Old Testament phrase, "let the wife be fearing from her husband."

But passing that mystery of faith, the mystical union, and to return to moral duty; I say to you all in general that are husbands, and to you one by one, "let every one of you love his own wife" in the manner Christ loved his church; and that because she is his other self; and let every wife be struck with reverence of her husband, in respect of the character God has impressed on him with relation to her, moving her to carry towards him with all becoming regard.

Doctrine I. It is the nature of true Christianity to join a careful, tender regard for moral duty with the believing consideration of the mysteries of faith. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church. "Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself."

The truth of this doctrine appears, if we consider,

1. That the great design and end of the whole contrivance of the gospel mystery was the restoration of morality, lost in the world by Adam's fall. That is, to bring men back again to the love of God, in their duty to him and one another, according to the moral law, the eternal rule of righteousness. This might be shewn by parts, that it was for this end Christ died. "He gave himself for

us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works." Believers are united and married to Christ for this very purpose, "that they might bring forth fruit unto God." But let it here suffice, that the mystery of Christ is in general determined to be great. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

2. That the faith of these mysteries is the channel, and the only channel of true morality acceptable in the sight of God. Whatever other way vain man may think to arrive at a temper of spirit and course of life pleasing to God, call it holiness or virtue, which they please, this Bible acknowledges no way of sanctification of a sinner, but in Christ, united to him by faith, 1 Cor. i. 2; Acts xxvi. 18; and true moral virtue another way produced, is as great an absurdity in the doctrine of Christianity, as fruit brought forth by a branch separated from the stock, John xv. 5.

Use. This shews the vanity and self-deceiving, 1. Of those who hug themselves in their pretended faith of the glorious mysteries of the gospel; but in the meantime their faith of them, such as it is, never makes them a whit more holy nor tender in the practice of moral duty, but leaves them at liberty there. I would say to such, as James doth, "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead." Vain are such means as reach not the end, the meat that does not nourish, the clothes that do not warm; so vain is that faith of the gospel mysteries to thee, that do not sanctify thee, and make thee careful of moral duty. 2. Of those who hug themselves in their pretended moral duties and virtues, separate from the faith of the glorious mysteries of the gospel, and running in a different channel, that being left bare, as fitted only for speculation. Such rationalists bewray their natural blindness and ignorance of the mystery of Christ with the Pharisees their predecessors, rejecting the counsel of God as weak and ineffectual, Luke vii. 30, which yet is the power of God and the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 24. What wisdom then is there in them?

Doctrine. II. It is the duty of husbands to love their wives, and that in such a manner as Christ loved his church; looking upon them as a piece of themselves. This is the principal doctrine of this part of the text; but having been already handled on the 25th and 28th verses, I shall pass it over with this reflection, that no doctrine carries morality to that height of purity and beneficialness to mankind which the doctrine of Christ doth. So that it is quite evi-

dent, that the greatest masters of reason are not the best Christians; that there is an understanding necessary for discerning the truths of the gospel in their native beauty, of which men are by nature destitute, of which the apostle speaks, when he says, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

Doctrine III. Close application of the truths of the word, and coming over the same truths again and again, is necessary for our getting benefit by them.

The reason of the former is, because of that aversion that is in our nature to spiritual truths, founded upon the tendency that is in them to holiness, on which account our unholy nature lies cross to them, because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Hence men naturally ward them off, as the refractory bullock does the yoke. While they are kept from being closely applied, the corruption of nature is not hurt by them; but being closely applied, it must needs lose ground. Thus David's conscience remained peaceable, though impure, while Nathan held his parable in the general. But when he applied it to him in particular, saying, thou art the man, he fell like a bird shot from a tree.

The reason of the latter is, because impressions received easily wear off our spirits, and need therefore to be renewed. These that hear the gospel only to get their judgments informed, and therefore cannot be entertained unless they hear some new thing, do shew that they have little judgment of their own case; what upstiring their heart and affections need. "Wherefore," says Peter, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth."

Use. This serves to direct both preachers and hearers,

1. To making close application of spiritual truths. Let us who are ministers aim at applying our doctrines close to the case of our hearers; take it close home to our own particular case, that we starve not ourselves while we feed others. And let hearers make every sermon a looking-glass for themselves, by taking home the word to themselves. All the good which sinners get of the law, of its commandments for their conviction of sin and duty, or of its threatenings and denounced curse, for their conviction of their misery and discovering their need of Christ, comes by close application of its commands, threatenings, and curse, to them in particular. And all the good to be gotten of the gospel promise, is by a believing application of it to ourselves, for our justification, sactification, and

eternal welfare. As the belief of the law, in general, without particular application, will never awaken the secure sinner; so the belief of the promise of the gospel in general, without particular application, will never give the awakened sinner rest to his soul.

2. That a seasonable and discreet inculcating of the same truths be not grievous to either of us, preachers or hearers. "To write the same things to you," says Paul, "to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe."

Doctrine IV. Christian husbands prove themselves Christians indeed, even in the love of their wives, by their displaying the influence of the pattern of Christ's love on their hearts therein, and of the ordinance of God, making them one flesh in their consciences. Their hearts are influenced by the one, and their consciences by the other, to love their wives.

Use 1. Hence learn that religion extends to the whole of our conduct; that whatever we do, we are to carry it along with us, and act by the rules of it. In every relation we must carry as Christians.

2. It is not enough that we love our relatives, and live peaceably with them, from natural principles of good humour, or in acceptableness to us for their personal qualities. If that is all, "what do we more than others? do not even the publicans so." It is necessary to prove us Christians that we be influenced to this by the example of Christ, and the ordinance and command of God having weight on our consciences.

Doctrine V. and *last*. Wives that would approve themselves to God in that relation, must carefully take notice of that superiority over them with which God hath invested their husbands, to reverence them on that account, and so submit themselves to them in the Lord.

All I shall say on this head, shall be comprised in these two things:—

1. There is nothing unreasonable or unbecoming in this, whatever you conceive your excellency to be. For, in effect, it is but submitting to God and reverencing his authority, whom I hope you allow to lodge it in whom he will. You claim that liberty among your own servants, to invest one of them with authority over the rest; and you challenge your authority in that servant to be regarded by the rest. This is the very case with respect to your husband. God has appointed him the superior servant. It is the ordinance of God. "I would have you know," says Paul, "that the

head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God."

2. All inferiority in relations is a situation in which God hath us on our trials for the other world; taking trial of us what regard we will pay to his authority at second hand. All superiors of divine appointment, being to their relatives so far in the place of God, Psal. lxxxii. 6. So then, since it must be with us eternally, according as we regard the authority of God, or regard it not, now; and in such inferiority the trial is taken of us, what regard we have to it. We may easily perceive how deep this matter draws; and for evidence that God does that way take trial of us for the other world, you need but consider that, when time is at an end, all that inferiority of one of us to another is gone, because the time of trial is over, and so there is no more use for it. "When he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power." No more subjection of wives to husbands, children to parents, people to magistrates or ministers. The more need, then, while the trial lasts, to approve yourselves to God as reverencers of his authority wherever he is pleased to lodge it.

Selkirk, January 2, 1728.

MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM KNOWN TO BELIEVERS.

SERMON XXIV.

MARK iv. 11,

And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables.

As the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, and the wisdom of God reckoned foolishness by the blind world; so, in all ages, the one part of mankind hath reckoned the other fools, according as they have followed these different sorts of wisdom. Sinners think saints fools; and saints know sinners to be fools. Tracing this to its original, it will be found to arise from that very different light in which spiritual things appear to the several parties, as saith the text. In which we have two things:

1. The spiritual privilege of some, with respect to the kingdom

of God: "Unto you it is given to know," &c. By the kingdom of God, is meant the kingdom of the Messiah. That was common style among the Jews in the days of our Saviour, Luke xvii. 20; xix. 11. But they quite mistook the nature of it, and fancying it would be a kingdom of worldly pomp and grandeur, they knew it not when it was set up among them; and rejected Christ as the king of it, because he appeared not in the splendour in which they apprehended the king-messiah would appear. However, Christ, being the Messiah, his kingdom is the kingdom of God. His kingdom was a mystery which they could not understand; but unto some it was given of God to know the mystery; and these being opposed to such as were without, it is plain by them is meant such as were within it, that is, the true subjects of it.

2. The state of darkness and blindness in which others were, with respect to that subject, the kingdom of God. To them that are without the kingdom, who are not the subjects of it, but of the kingdom of the devil, all these things, or the all that concerns that kingdom, is under a vail; as things proposed in a parable, which the hearers understand not.

The scope and substance of these words, we may take up in these four points, upon each of which I would enlarge a little:

I. There is a kingdom of Christ erected among men, which is the kingdom of God.

II. The kingdom of Christ is a mysterious kingdom.

III. It is the privilege of the subjects of Christ's kingdom, to know the mystery of it.

IV. It is the misery of those without the kingdom of Christ, that they know it not, more than a parable which they do not understand. We shall attend to these in their order:

I. There is a kingdom of Christ erected among men, which is the kingdom of God. Here we consider only two things, namely, the erecting of the kingdom, and the extent of it.

1. The erecting of this kingdom. Concerning this, observe three things:

1. The erector of it. He who set it up. That was the Father. "I have set my king," says he, "upon my holy hill of Zion." Therefore it is called the kingdom of God. It is different from his eternal kingdom. The kingdom of Messiah is a mediatory kingdom, of which some men, and not all, are subjects. It is a delegated kingdom, of which Christ is the king by delegation and commission from the Father. To put his title to it out of question, he was anointed king of it, namely, by the Holy Spirit, Isa. lxi. 1.

2. The cause for which it was erected was the recovery of lost

sinners; lost to God, and lost to themselves. All mankind being lost in Adam, God purposed from eternity, by his grace, to save some of them. But the kingdom of nature, founded on the work of creation, and governed according to the covenant of works, could not reach this end. Therefore there was a new kingdom erected, founded on the work of redemption, and to be governed according to the great charter of the covenant of grace. And Christ Jesus having borne the burden of laying the foundation of it with his own blood, upon him was the honour of the crown of it conferred.

3. The time of its erection. It was purposed from eternity. But it is an ancient kingdom, considered even from the time of its being actually set up, which was at Adam's fall. Then Christ entered on the government, and as a king examined, judged, and proclaimed a remission to our guilty first parents, and pronounced the serpent's doom, Gen. iii. 8, 9, and downwards. It has continued ever since, without interruption, notwithstanding the continual opposition made to it.

2. We may consider the extent of it. Here it may be observed, that, in respect of the kinds of jurisdiction, it comprehends the kingdom of grace. All the grace and favours of heaven to salvation, relative or real, that ever mortals may, or shall partake of in this world, are in the hands of this king to dispense. "God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church." It comprehends also the kingdom of glory, for the glory of heaven is also at his disposal, as well as the grace of heaven; Luke xxii. 29, 30. The kingdom of providence is also under his control; for into the same hands that the Father has committed the government of the church, he has also committed the government of the world, and that for the good of the church. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son."

In respect of the bounds of the kingdom. It reacheth to both worlds, heaven and earth. "All power is given unto me," saith Jesus, "in heaven and in earth." He administers the government in both worlds, for the kingdom is but one. Only some of the subjects dwell in the upper parts of his dominion, namely, the glorified saints in heaven, and them he rules. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water." Others dwell in the lower parts of his dominion, namely, the saints on earth, and them he rules, Psal. ii. 8. Nay, the passage between the upper and lower parts of his dominion, namely, the valley of the shadow of death, is part of his dominion also, that you may be sure that his kingdom, as large as it is, is but one. "He hath the keys of hell and of death."

In respect of duration, this kingdom will last for ever, without end. "Of this kingdom there shall be no end." At the great day, indeed, he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, presenting all the designed subjects of it complete, according to the design of the erection of the kingdom. But he will continue in his kingly dignity and office, without end. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

USE 1. Beware then of opposing this kingdom of Christ, by sisting yourselves enemies to him by unbelief and impenitence, opposing truth and holiness. It is the kingdom of God, and therefore shall undoubtedly prevail, and the enemies of it will fall, and fall under a dreadful weight, falling under the wrath of this king, which will grind them to powder, Luke xx. 17, 18.

2. Submit yourselves to the Royal Mediator. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but for a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Submit to his righteousness, renouncing your own. To his teaching, renouncing your own wisdom. Submit to his government, renouncing your corrupt lusts and affections. His father has put the crown on his head; his mother, also, crowns him the day of his espousals, Song iii. 11; and on your espousals to him by faith, he will account himself crowned by you. We proceed now to the

II. Point. The kingdom of Christ is a mysterious kingdom. A mystery is a secret, or hidden thing; hidden under some outward vail or other, which must be drawn aside, before one can see and discern it. Accordingly, the kingdom of Christ is a secret, a hidden thing; a mysterious kingdom, though among men before their eyes.

1. The kingdom of Christ itself is a mystery. "The mystery of the kingdom." The kingdoms of this world are no mysteries, for the outward shew which they make to the eye, with crown and sceptre, and other ensigns of royalty, plainly discovers to the meanest capacity, at first sight, what they are; and is equal to, if not above their intrinsic excellency. But the outward shew of the kingdom of Christ is so mean and low in this world, that the carnal eye cannot thereby discern it to be a kingdom at all, far less to be a kingdom above all other kingdoms, as indeed it is. And therefore I think it is that Christ says, "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation." It is like a treasure in earthen vessels, a prince in the habit of a servant, not to be known by the outward shew.

2. It is a kingdom of mysteries; "even the mysteries of the kingdom." A constellation of mysteries; many mysteries gathered to-

gether in one; so that there will still be mysteries to be discovered to the favourites of the King, and they will never be fully known till the vail be rent, and the soul be admitted into the holy of holies above.

There are mysteries of faith in it. Mysteries to be believed. We have a cluster of them in these words: "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." The incarnation of the Son of God, his humiliation in his birth, life, and death on the cross; his burial, resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right hand of God in our nature, are all great mysteries of faith.

There are mysteries of privileges. O what mysterious privileges are conferred on the subjects of this kingdom! The imputation of Christ's righteousness to them, the holiness of his nature, the righteousness of his life, and the satisfaction made by his death; all set down on their account, and their justification and deliverance from the law as a covenant of works by it, are great mysteries. The union of believers with Christ is justly called mystical, for it is a great mystery indeed: the head in heaven, the members on earth in a mean and low condition. They crucified with Christ, so dead, yet living. So as he was in the world, an unknown king; so are they in it unknown favourites, walking under a vail.

There are mysteries even of practice. As great is the mystery of the principles, so of the practice of godliness. Sanctification by union with Christ through faith, 1 Cor. i. 2; Acts xxvi. 18, is a mysterious way of sanctification unknown to the Jewish rabbies and Greek philosophers, an imaginary sanctification in the eyes of all legalists. The life of faith, emptying the man of himself, counting all his doings and sufferings loss and dung; doing every duty in borrowed strength, standing on borrowed legs, seeing with borrowed eyes, bearing burdens with borrowed strength; Christ being all to the man, and himself nothing, is a mysterious practice. Yet it is the life and practice in the kingdom of Christ. "I am crucified with Christ," says Paul, "nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

There are mysteries of providence. Kings of the earth have their secrets of government, kept up from the body of their people. The king of Zion has his secrets of government too, vastly more beyond the reach of the spectators of the conduct. This providence was represented to Ezekiel, chap. i., under the emblem of a

wheel within a wheel, going on its four sides, the rings so high as they were dreadful, and full of eyes. The King's special favourites cast down to the dust, his enemies raised up. John Baptist's head in a charger, the incestuous Herodias triumphing over it. Men going in the way of duty, and the storm blowing hard on their face. Others going on in the way of wickedness, and the sun of providence shining warm on them. The King's dear children singled out to extraordinary afflictions, and so made a spectacle to the world; and rebel sinners treated as the darlings of heaven. These are such mysteries as have puzzled the best of men to unfold; as Asaph, Psal. lxxiii.; Jer. xii.; and upon which the blind world can make no commentary, but such as destroys the text. When they say, "It is vain to serve the Lord; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy. Yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."

Use 1. Take heed how you treat religion and seriousness, in the principles and practice of it. Beware you traduce it not, in your words and course of life, as foolishness; but maintain a solemn regard to it upon your spirits, lest your censures of it be found as those of blind men judging of colours, while you condemn what you do not understand; and lest a fire unblown from a holy jealous God, whom you discern not in the revelation which he hath made of himself in Christ, break out upon you unto destruction. "Now therefore be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; for I have heard from the Lord God of Hosts, a consumption even determined upon the whole earth."

2. Profane persons are none of those who belong to this kingdom. Drunkards, swearers, dishonest persons, unclean persons, and carnal worldlings, that have not even the appearance of godliness. These are none of this kingdom, for there is no mystery in their case but a mystery of iniquity, proclaiming them to belong to the devil's kingdom, Gal. v. 19.

3. Formal hypocrites belong not to this kingdom. You that are strangers to the power of godliness in the inner man, absolutely unacquainted with the life of faith in your practice and experience; whose religion is a parcel of mere bodily exercises, external performances. There is no mystery in your religion, what is of it appears to the eye. The hidden man of the heart is wanting, and therefore it is naught; "for bodily exercise profiteth little." "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such turn away." We are now,

III. To shew that it is the privilege of the subjects of Christ's kingdom to know the mystery of it. Here consider,

1. The subjects of the kingdom of Christ. Who are they. They are believers, and only believers. All the members of the visible church are Christ's subjects in profession; but it is believers only who are so in reallity. They are the only persons "who have been made willing in a day of power;" who have opened the everlasting doors of their souls to receive the King of Glory, to reign in them, and over them for ever; who have been espoused to him, and put the crown upon his head.

2. Their privilege in this point. It is "given them to know the mystery of the kingdom." It is their privilege to be already initiated in the mystery of the kingdom, to have the beginning of the knowledge of it. They have obtained a proper view of the mysteries of faith, of privilege, of practice, and providence, though in the meantime it is but in part. "For now we see through a glass darkly, and know but in part." They have so much insight into them, as keeps them from stumbling at them; and all the wisdom of the world, and human learning, cannot give this much. This have all the saints. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

It is their privilege, also, to be in due time perfected in the knowledge of the mystery of the kingdom, as far as their limited capacity, enlarged by glorification, can reach. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know, even as also we are known." The light of glory will enlarge their knowledge to a high degree, that shall perfect their happiness. And whoever learn the first elements of it here, shall certainly get it perfected hereafter, and get over all their difficulties that now remain. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."

3. Let us consider how they get the knowledge of this mystery which they have. They get it by the light of the word. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." The Bible is the book of the manner of the kingdom, and unfolds the mysteries of it, as Asaph found in his experience, Psal. lxxiii. 16, 17. The Bible, indeed, is flat, tasteless, and nauseous to many; but to none of the subjects of the kingdom, only to those that are without.

They get this knowledge, also, by the teaching of the Spirit, with the word. "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." He lets in a light from heaven into the mysteries, and opens the eyes of believers to see the wondrous things. And no advantages of human art can make up the want of this teaching. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But all the saints enjoy this teaching. "For it is written," saith our Saviour, "in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." They obtain this knowledge, also, by experience. "O taste and see," says David, "that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." An unfelt religion, is the religion of them that are without, whose sound principles are like fire painted on a wall; as far from any sanctifying efficacy on their lives, or from burning up their corruptions, as that painted fire is from burning the house on which it is. But the religion of the saints is a felt, experimental religion. They feel the power of its mysteries upon their own souls, and therefore adhere to them, in spite of carnal reasonings against them, for it is difficult to dispute men out of their senses. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," says Paul, "for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

Use 1. Come and see, is the only proper way to be satisfied as to the reality and excellency of religion. Philip gave this advice to Nathaniel, and, by following it, he was soon brought to say to Jesus, "thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Enter yourselves subjects of this kingdom by believing, and you shall know the mystery of it. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Would you have the privilege of subjects, before you be subjects? Or would you know a mystery, before you give yourselves up to be taught? It is the commendation of religion that none disparage it but those who have no experience of it; none condemn it, but those whose blind eyes never saw the merits of the cause. So the day will come that they will retract, at least when there is no remedy.

2. No king treats his subjects so advantageously, so honourably, as Christ doth his. The devil keeps his subjects in darkness, and darkness is the main pillar of his kingdom. Without that, the works of darkness would appear loathsome. Christ brings his subjects into light. He makes them wise and knowing, however other-

wise simple. Kings of the earth will not impart the secrets of their government to their subjects, if it is not to very few. But the Prince of the kings of the earth makes all his subjects acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom. We proceed,

IV. To shew that it is the misery of those without the kingdom of Christ that they know not the mystery of it, more than a parable which they do not understand. Here consider,

1. Who these are, that are without. All unbelievers are such, who have never opened their hearts to receive Christ by faith. The Jews called the Gentiles by this name. But our Lord teaches that it belongs to unbelieving Jews, as well as Gentiles; and so to unbelieving Christians as well as heathens. Though they are in the church they are not of it, and so are reckoned without; being out of God's family, out of his covenant, and out of the body of Christ.

2. What is it they do not know? The text says, all these things; namely, all that concerns the mystery of the kingdom; the shell, the outward appearance of it is excepted. They know nothing of the other parts of it. All is to them under a vail. Christ the King of it is a vailed Christ to them. They know him not. The gospel, the sceptre of the kingdom, is a hidden gospel to them. The Spirit, the light and life of the kingdom, is an unknown Spirit to them. "He is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." The ten commands in the hands of the Mediator, the laws of the kingdom, are unknown to them in their spirituality, Matth. chap. v. The covenant of grace, the instrument of government in the kingdom, is an unknown instrument to them, Psal. xxv. 14. The mysteries of faith, privilege, practice, and providence, remain all under a vail to them. Let us inquire,

3. How it is they know it not. Though they know the words in which that kingdom is revealed, they know not the thing itself. As a man hearing a parable in his mother tongue, understands the grammatical sense of the words, yet does not perceive the thing itself, wrapt up in the parable. So is it here. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." They are to them like a lecture of philosophy, in a learned language, to a schoolboy.

They know it not by the teaching of the Spirit. "They are sensual, having not the Spirit." They are strangers to supernatural illumination, and the highest source of their knowledge is flesh and blood, improved by external objective revelation; being strangers to the subjective revelation, the opening the eyes of the mind, Deut. xxix. 4.

They know it not by experience; and so they know no more of religion than one doth of honey or vinegar, how sweet or how sour they are, who may have heard of them, but never tasted the one or the other.

USE 1. Here see the source of the dreadful inundation of atheism, deism, and contempt of revealed religion; the source of the flood of irreligion, immorality, and profanity, overflowing all its banks this day. These wretched men are without, and though they have no eyes to see the mystery of the kingdom, they have pride and self-conceit to think that they see through it. Their impetuous lusts need such a shelter, and they know that if there be that reality in religion which they would not wish, they are undone for ever. So they neither come into the kernel of religion, nor desire to come; but break their teeth on the shell which they cannot open.

2. I exhort all to study the mystery of the kingdom of Christ. Religion is another thing than either the profane multitude, or common crowd of professors take it to be. Strive earnestly to get into the spirit of it now, and to feel its life and power upon your souls. It will be no comfort when in hell, with your eyes open, to say, that you never thought that it had been such a hidden thing. You have clear and strong testimony afforded you from the word of God, and the experience of the saints, that there is a reality in religion; and that the possession and practice of it are absolutely necessary to your happiness. "For except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" "and without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Trifle no longer, then, with this great and important concern. Give yourselves with earnestness, diligence, and perseverance, to the use of all the appointed means by which the necessary and happy change may be produced in your souls. Pray fervently that "he who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, may himself shine into your hearts," by his word and Spirit; "to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus, and thus make you his willing people in the day of his power." Amen.

Exercise and Addition.—Selkirk, before the Presbytery.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

SERMON XXV.

EPHESIANS v. 9,

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.

LIGHT, in religion, without heat and warmth, is so unlike heaven, that it will issue in utter darkness, where there is a scorching heat without light. True spiritual light, is like John Baptist, a burning and a shining light. When the Spirit was poured out after the ascension of Christ, for the enlightening of a dark world, Acts ii. 3, "there appeared cloven tongues as of fire." For, as upon the confounding of tongues at Babel, darkness came upon the world, the holy language being left but with a few, and corruption of manners came in like a flood upon that darkness; so when the remedy for this was given in Zion, there appeared cloven tongues, an emblem of the gift of tongues, by which light was to be restored to the dark world. And these tongues were of fire, because of the dross and corruption of the world, to be burnt up by them; light and purity returning together. Thus the saving influences of the Spirit are together enlightening and sanctifying: "Walk as children of the light; for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." That these words are parenthetical, appears from that, the words of the 10th verse are so constructed with the 8th, that they make one sentence with it; our text being interposed, as in the midst of a running sentence. Walk as children of light. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. For the fruit of the Spirit, &c.

The scope of the text is to shew that there is a necessary connection betwixt a gracious state and a holy life; which are so joined by the appointment of God, and the nature of the things, that they cannot be put asunder. It is true, many do so yoke together a splendid profession and an unholy life, as if they had found out the secret of conjoining light and darkness, Christ and Belial, hid from all saints. But our text confounds that mystery of iniquity, shewing that whoever are light in respect of their state, will be so also in respect of their conversation. "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." For clearing the sense of these words, let us consider,

I. The connection.

II. The words themselves.

III. Raise, and illustrate the doctrines contained in the text.

According then to this customary method, in discourses of this kind, I am,

I. To consider the connection of the text with the preceding words, in the particle *for*. Some think the particle γαρ, to be put for δε, as if it were merely a note of transition, as it is sometimes used, as in Luke xii. 58; and read, "Now the fruit of the Spirit," &c.; but to this I do not accede. It is a rule of interpreting Scripture, worthy to be written in letters of gold, namely, that we are never, without necessity, to depart from the proper and literal signification of words. And although an eager sticking to the literal signification of words, where a real necessity of taking them improperly and figuratively is sufficiently intimated by the Scripture itself, has been of fatal consequence in divinity, yet I nothing doubt, but men's taking to themselves a liberty of receding from the proper signification of words, without necessity, has, in several cases, cast a veil over the true sense of Scripture, and brought in upon the text what may be the true sense of, instead of bringing forth out of it, what must be so.

Now there is no necessity here for taking this particle merely for a note of transition. *For*, is to be taken casually. Though the apostle doth not here teach distinctly and directly, *how*, *but*, *wherefore*, we are to walk as children of the light; yet, by the by, he may, and really doth teach how we shall walk so, namely, by bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit, which is the reason alleged for taking it transitively.

We take it then casually, as our own and other translators for the most part do, and this is its most frequent signification; and so the words are a reason for something going before. He had shewn both the condition and the duty of the Ephesians, and inferred the latter from the former, and in the text gives the reason of the consequence. May not we walk as others, might they say, though we be light in the Lord? No, says the apostle, you cannot; for if you be light in the Lord, you shall certainly shine, and give light in your conversation. For the fruit of the Spirit, abiding and acting on all the children of light, is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

But here, vain men, who, to exalt free will, trample on free grace, may cavil and say, If there be such a necessary connection betwixt being light in the Lord, and walking as children of the light, in all goodness, &c., then to what purpose are exhortations to the duty of

walking so? May not one as well say to the sun in the firmament, Thou art the sun, walk thou as the sun giving light? ANSWER. The same God who has appointed the end, has appointed the means also, and they are joined together, not to be separated by men. Exhortations are means ordained of God for advancing holiness in heart and life, in these brought into the state of grace. As there is a necessary connection betwixt a foundation of Zion which the Lord has laid, and the putting of the copestone on it; so the means of building up are by that very thing secured. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus." It is true, it would be vain to speak to the sun at the rate aforesaid. But God did speak so to it, Gen. i. 14, 15; and it is by virtue of that efficacious word that the sun shines to this day, and is not extinguished. And as his Spirit makes the saints light in the Lord, so it is by virtue of his efficacious word that they walk as children of the light, in all goodness, &c.

But, ere we leave this, we shall remark, that before the apostle comes directly to shew how they must walk as children of the light, as he doth in the 10th and 11th verses, he here urges the necessity of it. For if the conscience be not first convinced of the necessity of a duty, one will but little regard how it is to be done. The good of souls is the supreme law of preaching, and all method is so to be managed as may be most subservient to it. Let us now go on,

II. To consider the words themselves, which are a proposition, in which we shall notice,

1. The subject.

2. What is said of it.

1. The subject which the apostle here treats of is, the fruit of the Spirit. And here we must take notice,

1. Of the reading in some Greek copies, *του φωτος*, instead of *του πνευματος*; "for the fruit of the light is," instead of "the fruit of the Spirit." But to confirm the common reading to be genuine, it may be observed, that the fruit of the Spirit is an expression used elsewhere in the New Testament, namely, Gal. v. 22; to this may be added Rom. viii. 23; but the fruit of the light, nowhere, as I remember. Observe also, that the word *φωτος*, being in the last part of the preceding verse, might, by the inadvertency of the transcriber, more naturally be repeated in the text instead of *πνευματος*, than this last could be inserted instead of *φωτος*. *Lastly*, the common reading is the more forcible, full, and decisive, and therefore to be retained. For the fruit of the Spirit comprehends the fruit, but not contrariwise; and the fruit of the Spirit here answers the word "in the Lord," light in the Lord, in the preceding verse.

2. We must next inquire what is meant by the Spirit here? Some, by the Spirit, here understand the new creature, or the light of grace wrought by the Spirit of God in the heart. Others understand the Holy Ghost himself. This last seems to me to be the genuine sense of this word in this place, and that because it is most literal and proper one of the two; since the new nature, or the light of grace, cannot be so called, but as the effect gets the name of the cause; and there is no necessity for receding from the more proper signification in this text.

But to prove the word Spirit to be taken here for the light of grace, not the Holy Ghost himself, besides the different reading already considered, two things are alleged; one is, that here there is no mention of the Holy Ghost before, but of light. ANSWER. There is a virtual, though not express mention of him in the phrase, "light in the Lord," since the Spirit is the bond of our union with Christ; and that is more than sufficient ground for mentioning him here. Another thing more weighty is, that the phrase, the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. v. 20, must be so understood, being opposed there to the works of the flesh, ver. 19. Now as fruit answereth to works, say they, so Spirit does to flesh, and therefore must be understood of the new nature. ANSWER. I judge that several learned commentators, who understand by the fruit of the Spirit there, the fruit of the Holy Spirit of God, are in the right; so that the phrase in both texts signifies the same thing. And the variation of the phrases there does not obscurely intimate this, namely, the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit; not the work or works of the spirit, that is of the new nature; which the immediate opposition betwixt the old and new nature would have required. For these works of the flesh, like wild oats, grow of their own accord, from out of the cursed ground of our corrupt nature, without toil or pains about them, to bring them forth. But these of the new nature do not so; they must be produced by the continued influences of the Holy Spirit, even in the trees already planted in the house of God.

I will not conceal, that what we read in the same 5th chapter of the Galatians, of the Spirit lusting against the flesh, as well as the flesh against the Spirit, in the same combat, seems to clash with our exposition. But I cannot help thinking, that even it also is meant of the Holy Spirit himself, in so far as he stirs in the saints holy desires and lustings; making the new nature to act and lust, in opposition to the old corrupt nature: even as he is said to intercede, pray, and groan with groanings which cannot be uttered; in so far as he stirs up, and produces these in the saints, Rom. viii. 26. It

seems to be reasonable to judge the Spirit that lusteth (in that sense) against the flesh, ver. 17, is the same Spirit by which the saints are led, ver. 18. But the Spirit by which they are led is the Spirit of God, Rom. viii. 14.

3. What is meant by the fruit of the Spirit? From what is said, it plainly follows, that the fruit of the Spirit is not the fruit of the Spirit as the subject of it, but the fruit of the Spirit as an agent, who by his powerful influences produces the same in the trees of righteousnes, or the branches of his own engrafting into the true vine. In a word, it is the product of the Holy Spirit in the children of light, which is pleasant and savoury before the Lord, therefore called fruit, according to that, "My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold." What that fruit in particular is, is declared in the other part of the text.

Lastly, It is to be considered, how the apostle's speaking here of the fruit of the Spirit, its being in all goodness, &c., concludes what was to be proved. The matter lies here. The reasoning is founded on that fundamental maxim of practical Christianity, that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Light, abides, acts, and produceth fruit in all the children of light, in all those who are light in the Lord. For Jesus Christ is by the Father constituted the head of all saving influences; and it is by the communion of his Spirit that we receive of his influences to make us fruitful. The Spirit uniting the soul to Christ, the fountain of light and life, it immediately partakes of the light of life, as a candle is lighted by a burning lamp touching it; but the candle, separated from the lamp, would continue to burn, as having in itself that which feeds the flame. But the creature is empty in itself, and therefore must be fed continually from Jesus Christ, by the communion of his Spirit maintaining the bond of union betwixt Christ and the soul, and taking of Christ and giving to it. So that if it were possible that the Spirit should once totally depart from the child of light, and the union be broken, that moment he would return to his former darkness. Now the fruit of the Spirit, thus abiding and acting in the children of light, is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth; therefore it necessarily follows, that they that are light in the Lord, will walk as children of light. We are now,

2. To consider what is said of this fruit of the Spirit. "It is in all goodness," &c. There is an ellipsis here of the copulating. Our translators supply the word, *is*. Some versions supply the word, *consists*. Whatever be supplied, that seems to be the sense, namely, that the fruit of the Spirit consists in all goodness, &c. Thus we read, Col. i. 10, of being fruitful in every good work. Now, here

we are to shew, I. What are the particulars in which the fruit of the Spirit, in a child of light, consists. These are goodness, righteousness, and truth. Now, forasmuch as all Christian virtues are the fruit of the Spirit, they are by the consent of interpreters all summed up in these three. And as every thing bringeth forth after its kind, so these are agreeable to the nature of the Holy Spirit, who is a good and righteous Spirit, and the Spirit of truth; and so they are also to the light, as our Lord shews, John iii. 20; "He that doeth evil hateth the light," and ver. 21, "He that doeth truth cometh to the light."

1. Goodness. There is a twofold notion in it: 1. Of loveliness; hence the phrase, good in one's eyes. So the subject of goodness, whether person or thing, is good in itself; commendable, lovely, desirable. Thus goodness comprehends holiness; purity in opposition to all uncleanness and filthiness; meekness, patience, &c., in opposition to wrath, bitterness, &c., which the apostle had before condemned; and also faith, without which none please God. 2. It has also the notion of communication; all good being communicative of itself, as philosophers observe. Thus a good person or thing is good to others, that is, beneficent or profitable. "Hence," says Paul, "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. Thus it comprehends bounty, mercy; in a word, a disposition to do good to others in their souls and bodies: and so it is opposed to covetousness, revenge, malice, &c., before condemned. Hence we cannot, with some, take goodness as relating only to one's self. For though, indeed, the goodness of a child of light cannot extend to God in this last sense, yet it may and must to one's neighbour, Psal. xvi. 2, 3.

2. Righteousness in the extent of its signification, speaks a conformity to the law in all the parts thereof. But being here contradistinguished to goodness, it cannot be taken in that large sense, but in a more restrained one; namely, as it denotes that whereby we are inclined to give every one his due. This is justice in all our dealings with men, of whatever sort.* Thus the Jews distinguished righteous men from good men. The righteous man, according to them, says what is mine is mine, what is thine is thine own. But the good man says, what is mine is thine, and what is thine is thine own; to which the apostle seems to have an eye, Rom. v. 6, 7. Now this fruit of the Spirit, righteousness or justice, is opposed to that covetousness before condemned.

Truth has a respect to God, ourselves, and our neighbour. There is a truth of the heart, in uprightness and sincerity. A truth of

things, words, and actions. Hence are these words of our Lord, "He that doeth truth cometh to the light." That is true things, agreeable to the rule, and having the reality of Christian actions, and not a shew and semblance of them only. A truth of thought and judgment, whereby one judgeth aright of things; and a truth of speech, whether testifying, teaching, or promising; all this comes under the name of truth, which is opposed here to dissimulation and lies, with respect to God and man; and to error, delusion, and vain hopes, whereby a person himself is deluded and deceived. It is particularly set against that deceit spoken of, ver. 6th, which could find no place but under the covert of darkness.

2. Let us attend to the extent of the fruit of the Spirit, with respect to these particulars. "It is in *all* goodness," &c. I make no question but this note of universality belongs to all the three; the phrase itself natively importing it. The fruit of the Spirit is not only in some goodness, righteousness, and truth—though many deceive themselves with parcels and shreds of these things—but it is in *all* goodness in one's self and to his neighbour; in *all* righteousness towards man; in *all* truth with respect to God, our neighbour, and ourselves. And these things are interwoven one with another, in the fruit of the Spirit. The goodness is true, and justles out no sort of righteousness or justice, communicative nor distributive, remunerative nor punitive. The righteousness is true and good; from right principles, motives, and ends. So is the truth, as it is here distinguished, proceeding from a good principle. Meanwhile, this extent of the fruit of the Spirit is to be understood not in a legal, but an evangelical sense; of a perfection of parts, not of degrees.

Lastly, Let us shew how these are the fruit of the Holy Ghost, in the children of light. They are so in three respects. 1. He implants them in the soul, giving it a good, righteous, and true inclination and propensity, agreeable to the holy law, according to that, "I will," saith the Lord, "put my law into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." 2. He preserves these graces when implanted, 1 Peter i. 5, without which they would die out. And, 3. He excites, quickens, and brings them forth to action, in the heart and life of the children of light, Song iv. 16.

The sum of the whole matter is this. Those who are light in the Lord, must needs walk as children of light; because the Spirit of God, abiding in them, does produce fruit in them, consisting in all righteousness, goodness, and truth, in their hearts and lives, with respect to God, themselves, and their neighbours.

DOCTRINE I. The Spirit of Christ abiding in the children of light, produces agreeable fruit in their hearts and lives.

DOCTRINE II. Goodness, righteousness, and truth, are the fruits of the children of light, produced in them by the Spirit of Christ.

DOCTRINE III. True Christian fruitfulness is universal. A word to each of these.

DOCTRINE I. The Spirit of Christ abiding in the children of light, produces agreeable fruit in their hearts and lives; even fruit suitable to his own nature, and their gracious state. For confirmation of this consider,

1. The Spirit is an active bond of union betwixt Christ and the children of light, these that are in him. By this Spirit, an empty creature is united to a full Christ; and by the same made partaker of his fulness, to their bringing forth fruit in him. "The Spirit shall glorify me," saith Christ, "for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." Hence we read "of the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." It is by the soul's feeding on Christ that it lives, and whosoever feed on him, shall live by him, a life of holiness, as well as comfort. "He that eateth me," saith Jesus, "even he shall live by me." Meanwhile, our Lord tells us, that this life is by the participation of his Spirit. It is the Spirit that quickeneth.

2. Consider the end for which the Spirit is given to these that are his. It is in a special manner for their sanctification, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27; so that all who are chosen of God to everlasting life, are sanctified by the Spirit. "For they are chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." It is his work to conform them more and more unto the image of Christ, and he effects it accordingly. "For they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." And the same Spirit being in them which is in Jesus Christ, cannot fail to make them like him in their bearing the fruits of holiness; even as in Ezekiel's vision, when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up also, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

3. The several designations given to the Holy Spirit evince this. He is called the Holy Spirit, not only because he is holy himself; but chiefly, because he makes them holy in whom he dwells. He is the Spirit of grace; for he implants it, preserves it, excites, strengthens it, and at length perfects it. He is the Spirit of life who mortifies the old man, and quickens the new. He is the water that purges away the filth of sin, and makes the soul fruitful. He

is even a fountain of living water springing up in the soul. He is the fire that burns up corruption, and inflames the heart with the love of God. And, to add no more, he is the wind from heaven, making the spices in Christ's garden to flow out.

USE. 1. Of information. This lets us see, that in vain are the pretences to the Spirit and a gracious state, in those who bring not forth the fruits of holiness in their hearts and lives. The trees of righteousness bring forth holy fruits. "If God be our Father, where is our honour of him; if our Master, where is our fear of him." If the Spirit of Christ be in us, where are our love, joy, peace, for these are the fruit of the Spirit.

2. Those who are so far from the fruits of holiness, that their profane lives are filled with the fruits of wickedness, have not the Spirit, but are in darkness, Gal. v. 19. To what purpose do men pretend faith in Christ, while they go on in a course of sin, and will not part with their lusts. They that are Christ's, have Christ's Spirit; and that Spirit will give quite a new turn to their hearts and lives.

USE 2. Of exhortation. Unholy sinners, as ever you would be holy, labour to get Christ's Spirit in you, to dwell in you, and act in you.

MOTIVE 1. Without the Spirit you are undone for ever; for without the Spirit, without Christ; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Without Christ, without God, and without hope. The dead corpse may be kept a while; but when there is no hope of the return of life to it, it is buried in a grave. So, without the Spirit, you may be through the patience of God spared a while; but the end will be, to be cast into the pit, and buried out of God's sight.

MOTIVE 2. If you get the Spirit, you are made up for ever. When the Spirit comes, life comes that shall never fail, John iv. 14. He will unite you to Christ, quicken, enlighten, and sanctify you. He will give you grace, actuate and increase it, and change you from glory to glory.

DIRECTION. Pray earnestly for the Spirit. Your heavenly Father shall give the holy Spirit to them that ask him. Look and wait for the Spirit in all ordinances. "Blessed are they that sow beside all waters." They that would have the wind blow on them, go out into the open air; though they cannot raise it, they go where it blows. Give up yourselves to the Spirit; say, "Turn me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." Lay down yourselves at his feet, to be enlightened, quickened, and sanctified. Cherish the least spark; it may increase into a flame.

2. Children of light, as you would abound in the fruits of holiness, take heed how you entertain the Spirit. Resist him not, but fall in with him in his operation. Quench not the Spirit. Beware of casting water on the holy fire, by sinning against light, or by indulging in sensuality. Withdraw not fuel from it, by neglecting the motions of the Spirit. Smother it not, by not giving vent to the motions and operations of the Spirit within you.

Doctrine II. Goodness, righteousness, and truth, are fruits of the Spirit in the children of light, produced in them by the Holy Spirit of Christ. For the confirmation of this, I shall only briefly observe,

1. That God is good, righteous, and true; and they are partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4; and so, as children, they resemble God their Father.

2. That God has been in a special and gracious manner, good, righteous, and true to them. As to the point of righteousness, that Scripture may be noted, "He is just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," namely, for the merits of Christ. And it is the nature of God's dispensations of saving grace, to impress the same dispositions on the happy subjects of them. They are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

3. That the holy law is a law of goodness, righteousness, and truth. This law is written on their hearts, Heb. viii. 10.

Lastly, That wickedness, unrighteousness, and lies, are the works of the devil, and the works of the flesh; to which the fruits produced by the Spirit in the new man are directly contrary.

Use 1. This writes death on the foreheads of three sorts of persons:

1. Wicked, ungodly, and ungracious men, who are far from goodness, remaining in the evil state and disposition in which they were born; in whose mind, will, and affections, the evil of sin yet reigns; and are neither graciously good in nor to themselves, nor others. That is an evidence that the good Spirit of God has never yet entered into that heart to dwell there. Alas! will some say, I see much evil, all evil in my heart, but goodness is far from me. Answer. It is a piece of gracious goodness for one to see the evil of his own heart; but yet there is a pearl of goodness in the saints, amidst a dunghill of evil. God owns it for goodness though it be so, and it is folly in thee to deny it.

2. Unrighteous men, who are unjust in their dealings with men, who are given to fraud, cheating, and tricking, if they can gain thereby; and can go over the belly of conscience and common justice, to advance their worldly interest. This is an evidence that the

world is your God and portion; that there is no fear of God before your eyes; that you are children of darkness and not of light. Let me tell you, where you win a penny by it, you lose a talent; the gain is the price of blood, of thy soul.

3. Those who make no conscience of truth. Children in whom there is no truth, are not children of light. Such are hypocrites and dissemblers with God, who pretend fair, but whose heart is not upright with the Lord; who, under the cloak of a profession of religion, indulge themselves in sin, in some living reigning lust or other. Ah! whom do you mock. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Such, like the false mother, divide the child; by a holy profession, and an unholy practice. So shall their doom be to be cut asunder, and have their portion with hypocrites. Such are liars, who make no conscience of speaking truth; especially such as lie in defence of an unholy life, which is a most common sin; there being everywhere agents of the devil, who have abundance of vain words to bestow in defence of these things. These are of their father the devil, and with him they must lodge for evermore, Rev. xxi. 8.

Use 2. Of exhortation. Let us,

1. Study goodness. To be good, pleasing, and acceptable in the sight of God, and of men also, so far as we may in God's way; namely, by meeknesss, gentleness, readiness to do good; and for this cause, let us hate sin as the greatest evil. Let us all endeavour to be beneficial to mankind, as we have access; to embrace all occasions offered for the advancing of the temporal, but especially the spiritual good of others. Let no man say, Am I my brother's keeper? Nor of the ruin of others, What is that to us? And let us abridge ourselves of our liberty, even in lawful things, to that very end, that we destroy not those for whom Christ died.

2. Be strictly just in all our dealings with men. Moral honesty is not the whole of religion, but it is such a necessary part of it, as the want of it will declare a man a stranger to real godliness, profess what he will, Psal. xv. 1—3.

Lastly, Let us study truth and cleave to it. Truth and sincerity of heart before the Lord; the doctrine of truth, and truth in all our words.

Doctrine III. True Christian fruitfulness is universal. On this I have not time to enlarge.

Use. By this we may try our state, and whether our fruit be the fruit of the Holy Spirit in us or not. True fruit is universal, Col. i. 10; Psal. cxix. 6. There is a perfection of parts in the fruit of the Spirit in believers, though not of degrees. They do sincerely

aim at all, and endeavour all the parts of goodness and holiness, though in none of them they attain to legal perfection. Hypocrites are ever partial in their fruits, pretended to be fruits, and never aim at universal obedience of heart and life. Amen.

Eyemouth, July 12, 1706.—*Monday after the Sacrament.*

CHRIST THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER.

SERMON XXVI.

PHILIPPIANS i. 21,

For me to live is Christ.

IN a day of converting grace, in Christ's marriage-day, there is a glorious transmigration of souls betwixt Christ and believers. Christ loves the believer, and the believer loves Christ. The believer has Christ's heart, Song iv. 9, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse." Some render it, "Thou hast knit my heart to thine;" as if they had no more two hearts, but one. The Septuagint renders it, *unhearts me.* And Christ has the believer's heart. "Whom have I in the heaven but thee; and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee." The believer desires nothing beside him, nothing like him, nothing after him. As the lady at Cyrus' feast, who said she saw none but her husband. Christ lives in the believer, Gal. v. 20. Christ is his life, Col. iii. 4. Alas! that there should be so many Christless Christians, who never have discovered the beauty of this plant of renown. Paul was none of these, as appears in these words, wherein we are to consider,

1. The sum of Paul's practice: "To me to live is Christ." Some render it, "for Christ is gain to me in life and in death;" as if the sense were, whether I live or die, Christ is always my gain. But this is a force upon the text which, in the original, runs word for word, as in our translation. The words bear another sense. The phrase, indeed, is something unusual; but love burning in the heart to Christ, is not easily satisfied with expression. When Hezekiah is wondering at the Lord's love, he says, "thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption:" or, thou hast loved my soul from the pit. When David was intent on prayer, he tells us, but, "I prayer," Psal. cix. 4. When on peace, "I peace," Psal. cxx. 7. Now Christ is all to the believer, "To me to live is Christ."

I endeavour to live Christ, to think Christ, to speak Christ. As all the lines drawn from the circumference to the centre meet in one point; so all my preaching, all my suffering, yea, all my life, has a tendency to Christ, to please him, and to glorify him. Christ was the great scope of his life. To the unrenewed man, to live is himself. He acts from, for, and to himself. Christ gets self's room in the believer. He acts from him, to him, and for him.

2. In the verse there is the sum of his hopes: "To die is gain." Death, that is the great enemy of mankind, shall be gainful to me. If I lose a temporal life, I will find an eternal. I will make a good exchange of trouble, for eternal rest; of a miserable world, for heaven; and then shall I fully enjoy this Christ for whom I live; and shall also glorify him in death, whom I glorify by life.

3. The connection of a holy life, and a happy death. To live is Christ, before to die be gain. These God has joined, and no man can put asunder; though if wishes would do, they would be often disjoined; as many are of Balaam's mind, in desiring to die the death of the righteous. They must glorify him here, who shall be glorified by him hereafter.

4. The dependence of these words on the preceding. They are a reason of what he said before, ver. 20. He had said, that he hoped, (being now prisoner at Rome), to magnify Christ in his body; this he might do either by his life or by his death. In life he would preach Christ, by death he would confirm his preaching. He was not solicitous which of the two ways Christ should glorify himself in him, so that he were glorified by him; and the reason was, because his heart was bent on glorifying Christ in life; so if he lived, he would live in his element, and if he died it should be gain both to himself and others, and he should glorify Christ that way also.

Doctrine. Christ is the sum and scope of the believer's life. We shall shew,

I. What is supposed in this.

II. What is imported in it.

III. Why is it so with the believer. We are then to shew,

I. What is supposed in this. It supposes that the believer has seen Christ in his beauty. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." There is an interesting question, John xiv. 22, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" There is an illumination in the knowledge of Christ, given in the day of Christ's power, to the elect; that the world, even the most refined hypocrites, attain not unto; that determines them to make Christ their all. The illumination of the Arminians, that

leaves the will in suspense, is often the attainment of castaways. But the elect get one of another sort, John iv. 10. They who are thus brought to know his name, will put their trust in him. Hypocrites see him, as it were, but in his ordinary clothes, hence they see no beauty in him, that they should desire him; and hence such unmannerly treatment of him at his table, for had they known him, they would not have thus crucified the Lord of glory. The believer sees him in his royal robes, clothed with glory, and altogether lovely. There are two things which every believer has seen in Christ, but no hypocrite has seen them:

1. His transcendent excellency, Matth. xiii. 45, 46. They have seen that in him that has darkened all created excellency. As when the sun ariseth, the stars hide their heads, the candles are blown out. The sun serves instead of candles, moon, and stars. If others see this, why do they prefer a lust to Christ; why is not to them to live Christ.

2. His fulness, his all-sufficiency, John i. 16; Luke xv. 17. An ass's head gave a great price at Samaria, in time of famine; and so the doings of the world appear bulky, when the fulness of the Mediator is not discovered. The treasure may be concealed, hid under the beggar's feet, hence he goes from door to door; but if it were seen, he would leave off his old trade and live upon his own. With Peter, he would say to Christ, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" and from him he would receive that water, which would be in him a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life.

II. We are to shew what is imported in it.

1. It imports that the believer's life is bound up in Christ's. "Ye are dead," says Paul, "and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." This he himself tells us, "Because I live, ye shall live also." What was David's encouragement against all distress? it was, "the Lord liveth;" and of his joy, and that made him that he could lay down his body with confidence in a grave? it was, "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." The believer's hopes are all in Christ, and should he die, they and their all would die with him. The apostle, in the text, lets us know his judgment, that life is not worth the having, without Christ. What is life but a vapour? Our days are few and evil; desirable not for their own sake, but for Christ's sake.

2. Christ is the object of the believer's life: (suffer me to term it so). As the tradesman is taken up about his employment, so is

the believer about Christ: "For I determine," says he, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The actions of his life do habitually centre in him, though in themselves they be divers. I shall instance in some particulars:

1. Christ is the believer's study, Philip. iii. 8, 10. He is the main thing which they desire to know. The mysteries of nature only, are prized by some; but the mystery of Christ is chiefly prized by believers. Here all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are; not only subjectively, but objectively. O what a roundabout way do men ordinarily take to gain knowledge! Paul took the shortest way, when he determined to hold by Christ crucified; for that is the body of divinity taught to the scholars of the Spirit of God. "He shines in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus." Look to him in his natures and offices; in what he did, and what he suffered, from his conception, to his sitting at God's right hand, and you will see a complete system. Would you know what God is; what man is by nature, and what by grace—all may be learned there.

Now, concerning this study of the believer, I would remark, that sometimes his book falls by-hand. They lose their sight of Christ, the face of Jesus is vailed to them. Like Job, they cannot perceive him on either side. This makes their faces gather blackness, and makes them go about with Job's cry in their mouth, "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come, even to his seat." For why, if he be gone, what have we more? for comfort, life, God, and guide, are gone.

Again, when the believer would know the nature of God, and what he is to him, he reads all through the vail of the flesh of Christ, for it is in him only that God is well pleased, Heb. x. 19, 20. God out of Christ is a terrible sight, to those who know what sin is, as the believer does. He looks to his mercies through Christ, and that makes the least of them appear very great. He takes a cup of cold water as sent to him by the sea of Christ's blood, and sees Christ in every mercy. But finally, whatever he sees in Christ, there is always something beyond what he has attained, Eph. iii. 18, 19. There are new jewels still to come out of this treasure. The desire is kindled to know more of him; like Moses, shew me thy glory.

2. Christ is the believer's choice, Psal. lxxiii. 25. The believer's choice is far different from the world, Psal. iv. 6, 7. He chooses Christ above all. He sees him as the best among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. These eagle-eyed ones can see defects in all created enjoyments, but none in Christ. There are two defects

which they see in all others. 1. Uncertainty. They see honour but like a windy bubble, that children blow up, presently gone. Riches to be the name of nothing; like a flock of fowls that light upon a man's ground, that presently take wing. 2. Insufficiency. They are no way commensurable to the desires of an immortal soul. "I have seen," says he, "an end of all perfection." Now he sees Christ to be a certain and a sufficient good.

He also chooses Christ instead of all, and takes him for all. The godly man knows he is all-sufficient. This is a wise choice. It is but a choosing of the fountain instead of the streams. Whatever perfections are in the creature scattered up and down, he has them concentered in him.

Christ has the believer's affections. Christ is his treasure, and therefore his heart is upon him. The affections that were sometimes scattered and misplaced, are now gathered together; and as all the rivers run into the sea, so they all run to Christ. His love is set on that lovely one, and he will neither be driven, nor bribed from it. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Their desires are toward him, Isa. xxvi. 8.

His hope is in him. His joy is in Jesus, Phil. iii. 3. His delight is in him; and if any person or thing has any of his love, it is for Christ's sake. This is the habitual bent of the soul. His sorrow is for offending him. He mourns most bitterly for having pierced him. His hatred is against sin, as the abominable thing that Christ hates. His fear is also lest he provoke him.

Even the believer's body is devoted to Christ. It is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Their members are instruments of righteousness. The tongue is the instrument of his glory, and they respect their bodies for that very cause, that they are Christ's. Hence, if he call them to suffer for his sake, their bodies and lives are at his service.

3. Christ is the end of the believer's life. He lives to Christ, Rom. xiv. 8. He endeavours to please him. Men-pleasers, and those who please Christ, divide the whole world. "If I yet pleased men," says Paul, "I should not be the servant of Christ." The true Christian has renounced his own will, and taken Christ's will for his. He hath learned to submit to his perceptive and providential will, that in all things he may please him to whom he owes himself. He endeavours to glorify Christ. His life is a burden to him, if he conceive he can do nothing for Christ. He is ready to think that day a lost day, in which Christ's glory has not been advanced by him in some measure. It is his work, and therefore he lives to pull down Satan's kingdom, and to advance the kingdom of Christ. The honour of his Lord is dear to him, and therefore he would be con-

tent, with the Psalmist, "to make his name to be remembered in all generations." Hence, he is one that will speak for Christ, and will not be ashamed of him before men. If his glory be impaired by others, he will strive to repair it, testifying against sin. He is one that will commend Christ, and sound forth his praises to engage others to fall in love with him. His life will also be such, as may bring glory to Christ. He will labour to write after the blessed copy which Christ has set before him. If he be called to suffer for Christ, he will not refuse it, to glorify his Lord. We proceed,

III. To shew why it is so with the believer:

1. Because Christ lives in him, Gal. ii. 20. The same Spirit that dwells in Christ, dwells in the believer; and as the same soul actuates both the head and the members, the oil poured on the head of our high priest runs down to the skirts of his garments.

They are, by the Spirit of Christ, made partakers of the divine nature; united to Jesus Christ, and how can the members but live to the holy head?

2. They had their life by the death of Christ, he bought them with the price of his own blood; no wonder, then, that to them to live be Christ. As Eve was made of a rib taken out of Adam, and thus was his own, so they are Christ's. They are his by right of redemption, why then should he not have their all? He gets nothing from them, but what was bought at a dear rate. It was for this end he died, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." If one should buy a thief from the gallows, would he not be obliged, in gratitude, to be wholly his, to whom he owes his life. Christ bought us from death, and that by his own death. How can the believer reflect on the price paid, but he must say to him, to live is Christ? O! says the believer, if the foot sinned, and God drew blood of the head; I contracted the debt, and my husband paid it, and shall I not be for him. There are five things that weigh much with the believer here:

1. The vastness of the price which Christ paid for his life, namely, his own precious blood, 1 Pet. i. 19. This price was the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. Had a world been crumbled to nothing, had all the angels been loaded with the wrath of God, and died each of them ten thousand deaths for our life; what had all this been to God dying. Believers live to him, because they see his glory as the only begotten of the Father, hence they stand and wonder, Isa. lxiii. 1, 2. They wonder at the Son of God suffering death to purchase their life; they are placed here as the iron in the fire, till it be all fire.

2. That Christ lived for them, and died for them. What brought

him out of the Father's bosom, but his love to them? Why could not the hallelujahs of angels keep him at court, but because the cries of the perishing elect pierced his heart? Therefore he came down. Father, said he, they shall not perish; if they owe any thing, lay it to my account, take payment of me; I will take their place. They cannot live, unless the law be satisfied by obedience, and justice satisfied for the sin committed. I will do both. So he came, and lived a life of perfect obedience for them, and died a death satisfactory for their sins.

3. The continuance of his sufferings, which was from his birth to his death, from the cradle to the grave. It was not a part of Christ's life that was for them, but it was the whole; and how can they but give him the whole of theirs.

4. Any thing they have to give to Christ, any thing they have with which to entertain him, or with which to do any thing for him, they owe it all to him. That they have a soul out of hell, they owe it to Christ, and shall it not be his temple? That they have a heart not filled with horror and eternal dispair, they owe it to him; and shall he not have it? That they have a tongue that is not burning in hell, they owe it to him, and shall not they act for him? —feet that are not standing in fire and brimstone, and shall they not run his errands?—eyes not blinded with the smoke of the pit; and in a word, a body that is out of hell; and shall not all be his and for him?

5. The proportion that was betwixt the seat of sin in them, and the seat of suffering in Christ. They sinned in their bodies, and Christ suffered in his body. His head was pierced with the thorny crown, his eyes were denied the light of the sun, his tongue was made to cleave to the roof of his mouth, he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; his fair face was defiled with spittle; his heart was melted like wax, in the midst of his bowels; his side was pierced with a spear; his hands and feet nailed to the cross; his strength dried like a potsherd; and wherefore all this, but that the body and all its members had been instruments of sin in men? And because their souls were the chief seat of all, therefore Christ's soul was the chief seat of wrath, sorrowful even unto death. Their souls had forsaken God, therefore he is forsaken of God. Pride and all mischief dwelt in their souls; therefore he put him to shame, and laid him low indeed. Is it any wonder, then, that they live not as they lived before? any wonder that to them to live is Christ?

Use. Then shew yourselves true Christians, by making Christ the sum and scope of your life, and that you may do so, I recommend these few things to you:

1. Abhor all doctrines that tend to the lessening of the glory of Christ. He made the gospel covenant for himself, and wo to them that turn it against him. But most, if not all the heretics stumble upon this stone, so that we may say, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in him." The cursed Socinians lessen his glory, making him but a nominal and official god. The Papists, many ways—by their masses, indulgences, invocations, and merit of good works. The Arminians make his grace lacquey it, at the foot of free will. Others put our faith and obedience in the room of Christ's righteousness. God's great design in the gospel is to exalt Christ; and the devil's great design is to depress him, and to raise up men for that purpose, to object against his nature, his offices, and the like. Some will not allow him, by his Spirit, to be the interpreter of his Father's will, but set up their own corrupt reason in the chair. Some rob him of the glory of his priestly office, and some will have no king but Cæsar. These things shew that they are Christ's enemies.

2. Appear for him and his cause. Remember that whosoever shall be ashamed of him, to act for him and speak for him, of them he will also be ashamed. Be always then on his side, labour to propagate his kingdom. Recommend him to others, that they may fall in love with him. Recommend him to your neighbours, and especially, like Abraham, to your families, Gen. xviii. 19. Reprove and discountenance the dishonour done to him.

3. Beware of him, obey his voice, and provoke him not, Exod. xxiii. 21. Close with all the duties he lays upon you, and have respect to all his commandments. They that baulk any of them, he is not the sum and scope of their lives. Christ's word is a band strong enough to a gracious soul.

4. Be not satisfied with duties, unless you find Christ in them; unless "you behold the beauty of the Lord." Mary came to the sepulchre, but finding no Christ there, she wept; because she apprehended they had taken away her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid him. Duties are but empty husks without Christ. He is the marrow and life of all duties. They are but handmaids to lead you to Christ. Sit not down to make love to them, but go forward till you find him whom your soul loveth.

5. Perform religious duties, and love them for Christ's sake. It is but heathen morality to be virtuous for virtue's sake. No wonder that was their highest motive, for their gods generally were as bad as themselves, and therefore they pitched upon the dead idol of virtue, that had no relation to God. But be you godly for God's sake, holy for Christ's sake. To be holy for holiness' sake, without respect to Christ, is to make an idol of a created quality.

6. Engage in no duty, but in his strength. Flee on borrowed wings. The fire that was put to the incense, on the altar of incense, was brought from the altar of burnt-offering; teaching us, that from Christ the influences of grace must come into our souls freely.

7. Draw motives and helps for duty, from Christ's sufferings, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Zech. xii. 10. The law may break and bruise, and so may be useful in its own place to lead us to Christ; but surely it is the gospel alone that kindly melts the soul. The Christian's labour is a labour of love; because where the labour is right, love predominates.

Lastly, Lay the weight of the acceptance of all your duties, and all the good you do, only upon Jesus Christ. God is only pleased in him. Venture not to look on God, but through the vail of his flesh. Alas! many, if they attain to any good frame in duties, they are apt to lay the weight upon it, and say, now I know God will bless me. As if a beggar would assure himself of his alms, because he hath a tongue to cry, and a hand open to receive them. But remember a good frame is not Christ, and cursed "be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Calves offered on the altar of Bethel were rejected, when turtle doves offered on the altar at Jerusalem were accepted. Amen.

Ettrick, June 1, 1707.

BELIEVERS SEEKING A CONTINUING CITY.

SERMON XXVII.

HEBREWS xiii. 14,

For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

HEAVEN ever moves, yet is that the place of our rest; earth ever rests, yet is that the place of our travel, where we rest not. Time runs with a rapid course, and carries all men swiftly down the stream. It admits of no delay, and whether we sleep or wake, we are carried forward, to be sent forth within a little into the vast ocean of eternity, and to land us either in heaven or hell. Whether

we will or not, we must ere long bid farewell to the world; and were it with man as it is with the beasts, who when they are dead are done, we might sit at ease, suffering ourselves to be carried away with the stream at all adventures. But then man begins to live, when he is dead and gone; and, therefore, having here no continuing city, what remains but that we direct our course to one that is to come, and which is the great thing our text aims at. In which consider:

1. A supposition. The apostle plainly supposeth our absolute need of a continuing city, that is, a place of true happiness and rest; for so it must be understood, for, otherwise, hell is of the same continuance with heaven. Man is capable of happiness, the desire of it is interwoven with his nature. No man is insensible that he labours under some great defects, and every man sees the need he hath of something to give him perfect rest and satisfaction; and therefore the soul, like an hungry infant, sucks wherever it comes, and finding no rest in one thing, goes to another; and never can attain true rest, till it be perfectly carried to God himself, to take up its everlasting rest in him.

We have next a position consisting of two parts: 1. That the continuing city is not to be found in this world; our rest is not here. Here we do but sojourn for a time, and no sooner we come into it, but as soon we begin our journey to go out of it again; and, like the rising sun, haste forward to the going down. We begin then to die, when we begin to live; and death follows our life, as the shadow does the body, till it at length overturns us. Then the tale is told, and the fable of life in the world is ended. 2. That the continuing city is to come. There is a place of perfect happiness and rest for the children of men, though not here. The present world affords many fine cities, but the world to come has only that "continuing city." Heaven is that continuing city, Heb. xii. 28, in which there are many mansions for the heirs of glory, when come home from their travels.

We have also in the text, the practice of the godly, most important to both parts of the position. They admit the conviction of this world's emptiness, and live under the sense of it. They look upon the world as it is in itself, as indeed affording no continuing city to them. They say, "we have here no continuing city," we see none, we seek none, we expect none in it; but they seek that which is to come. The Greek word is emphatical, and signifies to seek with all our might; to seek with great care and solicitude. They do not sit down, and faintly wish for it, but set themselves earnestly by all means to obtain it. Their former question, "Who will shew

us any good?" is turned to that, "What shall I do to be saved?" While others are taken up about present things, they are labouring to procure to themselves a blessed immortality.

Lastly, The connection. These words are given as a reason or motive to stir up to the duty proposed, ver. 13, namely, that we ought to be denied to the world, take up Christ's cross, and patiently bear all reproaches for him. For why? says the apostle, "we have no continuing city here;" and ere long we shall be out of the reach of enemies; and even at this time we are seeking other things than the world can afford.

DOCTRINE. We have no continuing city in this world; but it is the duty of all, and the practice of the godly, earnestly to seek after the continuing city above. We shall,

I. Shew that we have no continuing city here.

II. In what respects heaven is a continuing city.

III. I shall open at large the seeking of this continuing city.

IV. The reasonableness of the point. We are then,

I. To shew that we have no continuing city here. This is evident,

1. Because the dissolution of this world is approaching, Psal. cii. 6; 2 Pet. iii. 7—12. It had a beginning, and it shall have an end. The day will come, when the earth, and all things therein, shall be burnt up. It was a dreadful day when Sodom was burned, but it will be much more dreadful when all the cities of the world shall be consumed. Sodom destined to the flames, was no city for Lot to continue in; and seeing this world must also be burnt up, may we not conclude we have no continuing city in it.

2. Because we must all remove from it by death. Death is settled by a fixed decree. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." One generation passeth away to give place to another. Every birth and every death is an argument to persuade us that we have no continuing city here. Every child that is born, comes into the world with a warning away in its hand. Every dying person lets us see the way which we are to follow. There is room enough on the earth, notwithstanding all the vast numbers that have been before us. We must all answer the summons of death. It will not pity the poor, be bribed by the rich, nor boasted away by men of might.

6. Because of the uncertainty of all things here below, though we should last, and the world also. All worldly things stand on two lame legs, uncertainty and insufficiency, and therefore are not to be depended upon. There is nothing here that can satisfy the

soul. He spoke like a fool, who said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Though these things were sufficient, yet are they uncertain. They perish with the using; like the apples of Sodom, fair and fresh without; within full of sulphur, and, being handled, fall to ashes.

4. Because the Lord never designed it for a continuing city. The Lord made it as a stage to serve for a time, to be taken down when men had acted their parts upon it. It was the place for the trial of the children of men. Heaven was the place prepared for the godly before the foundation of the world; and hell was prepared of old, for others. This earth was only a narrow neck of land, to be swallowed up of eternity. We proceed,

II. To shew in what respects heaven is a continuing city.

1. The city itself is continuing. "It is a building of God; an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It is a kingdom which cannot be moved." Though the footstool may be set aside, the throne must continue. That city prepared before the foundations of the world were laid, must endure when the foundations of the world are overturned. It is a sure purchase that is made in the city above; for when the cities below shall be laid in ashes, this shall stand and flourish.

2. The Lord of the city is a continuing Lord, even Jesus Christ. He died once, but shall die no more. He has fought the battle for his people, and has reached the crown, and is set down on the throne. He sends his people such news as Joseph sent to his father: "God hath made me lord of all Egypt, come down unto me, tarry not." Jesus continues for evermore.

In respect of his natures, Rev. i. 17, 18. The human nature which he took on, he never did, and never will put off. Death made a separation betwixt his soul and body, but not betwixt his natures. The saints shall for ever see the human nature united to the divine nature; the man Christ at the right hand of God.

In respect of his offices. He will be the prophet of that city for ever. He that gave them the light of grace, shall give them the light of glory. He is an everlasting priest, even a priest for ever. It is true, he will offer no more sacrifice, "for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." But he will eternally exhibit that sacrifice, and intercede for his people, Heb. vii. 26; this is the everlasting security of the saints. He will be king there for ever, for of his kingdom there shall be no end.

3. The citizens of that city are continuing. "Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." There is no death there.

The garments of glory shall never be put off. Death entered paradise, but cannot enter this city, where the Lord of life reigns in his glory, 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54.

4. The abode of the citizens in this city is continuing. Adam was cast out of the earthly paradise, the Jews out of Canaan. But every saint "shall be made a pillar in this temple of God, and he shall go no more out." Heaven is the rest that remains for the people of God. They may have many a weary step in the wilderness, but when once come home they shall go no more abroad.

5. The privileges of it are continuing; they shall never be retrenched. Who can count the privileges which the citizens enjoy there! The people of God in this world are high privileged with the favour of God, and peace with him, pardon of sin, adoption, sanctification. They shall have all these in their utmost perfection, to be continued for ever. Their peculiar privileges in heaven are such as these: none of the miserable effects of sin are there. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." No bodily pain, no soul distemper, no desertion there. The Zion above will not complain that the Lord has forgotten her, or that God covers himself with a cloud, for there shall be no night there.

There shall be no sinning there, for there the spirits of just men are made perfect. The body of sin and death dies with the death of the body. The most holy person on earth sinneth, but the least star in heaven shall be without spot. Lamps of hell shall then wonder to see themselves shining lamps of glory. There shall not be even the possibility of sinning there. Adam when created had no sin, but the saints in the city above shall not be capable of sinning. They shall be for ever confirmed in a sinless and happy state. We have told what is not in it, but to tell you what is in it is more difficult. We may, by attempting it, darken counsel by words without knowledge. Take only these two words: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God: and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And so shall we ever be with the Lord." These are words which the inhabitants of heaven only are fit to explain.

6. The work of that city is continuing work. They rest not night nor day, singing praises to him that sits upon the throne. The harps of the people of God are not always in their hands now; sometimes they are hanged upon the willows. Their work there will be eternal recreation and perfect pleasure. This teaches us

that we must be made meet for heaven, and serve our apprenticeship here in the ways of holiness, before we can be admitted into that continuing city.

Lastly, The rest, quiet, and safety of that city are continuing. "It is a kingdom that cannot be moved." There are four things that put a city in hazard, but none of them are here. Enemies laying siege to it without. This puts the church in hazard here, and therefore there are watchmen set on the walls; but no enemy can approach to the city above. The devil and his army cannot come near it. Want of provision within, occasions hazard; but there shall be no lack there, for rivers of pleasures that never run dry, abound there, Rev. vii. 16, 17. The inhabitants of a city disagreeing among themselves is very hazardous. This was as hurtful to the earthly Jerusalem as the Roman army. But there can be no mutiny in this city. Then shall that be perfectly accomplished, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." The sad divisions amongst the Lord's people strike at the root of Christianity, by muttering as much as that Christ is not come, Isa. xi. 6—8. Therefore our Lord prays, that his people "all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." *Finally*, mismanagement of the governor may bring danger. Wisdom will save a city, and folly ruin it. Here is infinite wisdom at the helm, and how can they miscarry. We proceed,

III. To open up at large, the seeking of this continuing city. Here we shall shew what it supposeth; wherein it consists. What do they seek that are rightly seeking? and *Finally*, the properties of this seeking.

1. What this seeking supposeth. 1. It supposeth the want of a continuing city. None will seek what they do not want. When man sinned he lost God, and so a right to heaven; this all men, by nature, are under. And he that is thus seeking is sensible of his loss, and is under conviction that the world can afford none such; unless it were so, he would never seek it. Every serious seeker of heaven looks on the world as a wilderness, and himself as a pilgrim and stranger on the earth, Heb. xi. 13, 14. But alas! few are under this impression concerning the world.

2. The faith of a continuing city; that there is a place of happiness and rest. They believe "that there remaineth a rest for the people of God." They see that there is a land afar off, and that it is attainable by mortals. The faith of this is more rare than most men imagine. Were there a place in the world where men might live in all manner of prosperity, free from all evil, and all welcome

to it that would go; would not men flock thither, if they really believed it?

3. A sense of the need of it. Wise men will not seek that of which they have no need. The seeker of heaven sees the need he hath of it. He is one of a more noble spirit than to be satisfied with the husks which the earth affords. The earth may serve the body during this mortal life; but he knows he hath a soul that must live eternally, and a body that must be raised up again; and that this world can do him no service in these things.

4. The soul turning its back upon the world. The person who seeks heaven, with Paul, "forgets the things that are behind." "He is coming out of the wilderness, like pillars of smoke;" and answers that call, "come with me, from Lebanon, my spouse." We cannot seek both, more than serve two contrary masters. Our arms are too short to grasp both heaven and earth at once. If ye seek heaven, let earth go.

2. Wherein doth this seeking consist? It consists in these two things:

1. In earnest desires after it. "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly." The soul desires to be there in due time. Their heart is there, for their treasure is there. Their souls are reconciled to heaven by the power of grace. They have seen the beauty of the holy land, and heavenly city; though not with their bodily eyes, yet with the eyes of faith. They have been captivated with the map of it in the word of God. They desire it, because Christ is there; and there glory dwells, and holiness reigns for ever. "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Most men have no such desires. They would quit their part in paradise, if God would let them stay on this side of Jordan.

2. In suitable endeavours for it. The want of this holds many out of heaven. "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour." If wishes would carry men to heaven, who would go to hell? But there are difficulties in the way to it which they cannot digest, and therefore they intermeddle not with it. But they who seek it aright, turn the face of their souls that way, and labour for it. "Let us labour, therefore," says Paul, "to enter into that rest, lest any man fall, after the same example of unbelief." Strivers only, are right seekers. "Strive," says our Lord, "to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

3. What do they seek, that are rightly seeking?

1. They seek the Lord of the city. The command is, "seek the Lord while he is to be found, call upon him while he is near." Jesus the Lord of it is himself "the way, and the door;" none can enter but by him, John xiv. 6. Jesus is to the true seeker the greatest beauty of the upper house, Psal. lxxiii. 25. The name of the city is, "the Lord is there;" and this draws the soul of the believer hither. And if Christ were not there, heaven would not be heaven to the believer. "Being risen with Christ, they seek the things which are above, where he sitteth at the right hand of God."

2. A right and title to it. By Adam's sin, we forfeited our right to it, so we have our title to seek. We are commandeed to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." The soul sees itself miserable, whatever it have, if it have no right to that city. Hence Christ is precious. A match with the heir of all things is very desirable, seeing by him we are made citizens there. "For through him, we have access by one Spirit unto the Father; and are made fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

3. A conformity to it; even the kingdom of God to be within us. As every man labours to conform himself to the manners of the court where he desires to be, so the Christian "has his conversation in heaven," and desires to be more and more changed into the image of the Saviour. Heaven must come down into us, before we can get up to it. If our Father be in heaven, we will strive to be like him. Can we look on these to be seeking heaven, who mind nothing but the world and their lusts; in whose thoughts, words, and actions, there is nothing of heaven.

4. Evidences for the city. The soul will not only seek a right to it; but to know his right. Hence they will be crying, "shew me a token for good." When their interest is darkened, their hearts are filled with sadness; and when they behold it, their souls rejoice, when they can say, "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." A man that is seeking to buy houses or lands, will labour to get good evidences of his right to them.

Lastly, The possession of it in due time. "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest." One time or another, you will be at Paul's wish, "a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Christ gives it as an encouragement to his people, "I go," says he, "to prepare a place for you;" and therefore they seek and wait till their minority be past, that they may enter heirs to that glory. "Desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven."

I shall close with a word of use of what has been said. Bestir yourselves, then, to seek after the continuing city. Are there not many among us, who have neither right to, nor evidence for heaven; who live here as if this were their rest, as if they were never to remove; who, if death were to seize them this day, know not where they would lodge through the long night of eternity.

Consider the motive in the text: "we have no continuing city here." We must continue for ever, but not here. Were we to die like the beasts, we might live as they do; but we have never-dying souls. O consider well, that you must remove, that you may seek in time a continuing city. Death is posting on. Our life is but a vapour, a shadow, a nothing. The grave we must visit, there is no continuance here.

4. The properties of this seeking. How must we seek, if we would succeed? This is a necessary question, for our Lord tells us, "many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" and Paul tells us, "that a man is not crowned unless he strive lawfully." There may be much seeking to little purpose.

1. They that rightly seek the continuing city, seek it laboriously. "They labour to enter into that rest." They must not only open their mouths as beggars, but ply their hands as workmen seeking their daily bread, who earn it with the sweat of their brow. "We must seek it as silver, and search for it as for hid treasures." Many would be fed like the fowls, who neither sow nor gather into barns; and be clothed like the lilies, who neither toil nor spin. They would receive heaven if it would fall down into their mouths, but cannot think of working for it. They have something else to do. It is true, our labour and pains will not bring us there; but there is no getting there without it, Prov. xxi. 25. For consider, the several notions of the way to heaven, all importing true labour. We must work; yea, "work out our own salvation," or otherwise we lose what we have done. It is as the work of the husbandman, which is not easy. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." It is the running of a race that requires patience and much eagerness, "for we must press toward the mark, and so run that we may obtain." We must wrestle and fight for it, for heaven hath a strait gate, and cannot be entered with ease. We must strive to enter, yea press into it, and take it by violence. We must put forth our utmost strength, as those who are agonising, Luke xiii. 24, and at last overcome, Rev. iii. 12. These are the metaphors by which the Christian's exercises are described, and they certainly denote real labour.

Consider also the types of the way to heaven. Many a weary step, and many a bloody battle had the Israelites, ere they could settle themselves in Canaan. Jerusalem stood on a hill, and was surrounded with hills; many a weary step had some of them to take ere they won it, 2 Sam. v. 6; and when they came there, they had the hill of God to ascend, even Mount Moriah, where the temple stood, hence that Psal. xxiv. 3—6.

Besides, slothfulness is the pathway to hell, Prov. xiii. 14, and xx. 4. The sluggard is an unprofitable servant to himself and his master. For an idler to get heaven, is a sort of contradiction. Heaven is a reward, and therefore supposeth working. Heaven is rest, a keeping of a sabbath, and therefore supposeth previous toil.

2. Voluntarily. "The Lord meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness." When men do nothing in religion but by compulsion, they cannot succeed. God's people are a willing people, and he cares not for compelled prayers, or forced endeavours, when the hands go without the heart. Men naturally are enemies to heaven; and till heaven be in their heart instead of the world, they will never seek it to purpose.

3. Diligently. "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." We will lose it, if we seek it not diligently. "By much slothfulness the building decayeth." Men are busy for the world; the devil is busy to keep us out of heaven, and shall not we seek it diligently. But most men are of Pharaoh's principle, that religion is only a work for them that have nothing else to do, hence no diligence among them.

4. Vigorously. We are commanded to ask, to seek, to knock. It is not easily got. Faint attacks will not break open the gates of this city. It is requisite we summon together all the powers of our souls, "and whatsoever our hand findeth to do, do it with all our might." The iron is blunt, therefore we must exert the more force. Fervency in seeking, is necessary to make it effectual. It is the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man that availeth much.

5. Resolutely, as Jacob for the blessing. We seek what we cannot want, and therefore must steel our foreheads, and run through difficulties. "Skin for skin, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." The people that hearing of the Anakims, their hearts failed, were obliged to turn back into the wilderness. They that mind for this city, "must have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," that they may go forward through the rugged way.

6. Constantly. "We must be stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." We must not seek only by

fits and starts; that makes our seeking uneasy. Hot and cold fits are signs of a distempered body. This work is for term of life; "no man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." "The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Deserters are shamefully punished, while prisoners of war are treated with respect.

7. Seek it quickly, without delay, for we know not how soon our sun may go down. "We must work the works of him that sent us, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work." Your glass is running. If your time be done, before your interest in heaven be secured, it will be a heavy case. Hell is replenished with those that resolved to be better afterwards.

Lastly, Seek evangelically, that is, in a gospel way. This comprehends seeking, *first*, from a principle of new life, called the life of Jesus, 2 Cor. iv. 10. *Secondly*, from a sweet motive of love to God, even the love of Christ constraining us; and *thirdly*, from a noble end, the glory of God, the honour of the Redeemer, and glory of his grace, and our own salvation. *Finally*, doing all in borrowed strength; travelling "through the wilderness leaning on our beloved, denying ourselves, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh." We shall now,

IV. Shew the reasonableness of the point. And,

1. Why it is the duty of all thus to seek after the continuing city.

1. Because none of us have a continuing city here. Our old tabernacle is ready to fall down about our ears, what then should we be doing, but seeking that building of God. Hence we must remove, is it not then highly reasonable we should seek where we may take up our eternal lodging.

2. It is the command of God, whose commands we are not to dispute, but to obey, "for a son honoureth his father, and a servant his master." Now what is his command? It is, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." What a cord of love is such a command, where duty and interest are so linked together.

3. Because perfect happiness is only to be found there. That is the place where the soul-satisfying treasure only is to be found. "Lay up for yourselves, then, treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." You will never be able, by any means, to extract happiness from earthly enjoyments. Solomon had run round the world and viewed all, and what is his report, even "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The very nature of the soul is such, that

nothing under the sun can satisfy it; yea, the very erect form of the body teacheth us to seek heaven.

4. It is a dreadful contempt of heaven, not to seek it. It was the sin of the Israelites, "that they despised the pleasant land." It is God's mansion house, the land where glory dwells. Not then to be at pains to attain it, is a sin near akin to the sin of the devils, "who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." Yea, it is a contempt of the blood of Christ, the price by which heaven was purchased. O sirs, prefer not, in your practice, the world to the glory of heaven. Observe Heb. xii. 14—16. Will men say that they prize heaven, when they will not be at pains to secure their title to it?

Lastly, There is no getting there, without seeking it thus. There is no reaching the treasure of glory without digging for it. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." If men must have yet a little sleep and a little slumber, outer darkness will be their waking-place, Luke xiii. 24.

2. Let us shew why it is the practice of the godly. They seek this city,

1. Because they have been convinced that they have no continuing city here. By the Spirit of the Lord, the gracious soul "has seen an end of all perfection;" has got a sight of the vanity and emptiness of created things, and this has turned the soul back again from the broken cisterns, to the fountain of living water. They have seen that excellency in Christ, which has darkened the glory of created things.

2. Because their treasure is in heaven, Matth. vi. 21. If a man's treasure be in his coffers or in his barns, his heart will be there also; if in heaven, his heart will be there. Christ is the believer's treasure, and he is there; an eternal weight of glory is his treasure, and it is also in heaven.

3. Because heaven is the only rest for the godly. The world is the place of their toil and pilgrimage. They have trouble from without and from within, while here; but their rest is remaining for them above, Heb. iv. 9. They say to one another, as Naomi did to her daughters-in-law, "the Lord grant you, that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband." Rest is sought by every one, and seeing the godly look not for it here, they must needs be looking for it there.

4. Because this seeking is the native product of a new nature. The old nature carries the man downward, the new nature upwards, toward heaven. Grace is an active principle come from

above into the heart, and carrying the soul up to its own source. Every thing desires its own preservation and perfection, now glory is the best preservative and perfection of grace. It is a fountain that will not be stopped, but will cast up its waters. "It is in them a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life."

APPLICATION. Is it so, that here we have no continuing city? Then we may be

1. Informed and convinced of several particulars.

1. Then we must all die, and be as water spilt on the ground. Here our tent is set down, but not to continue here. The pins of the tent must be loosed, and man must go to his long home. Ere long you shall be arrested within the four posts of a bed, not to come forth, till you be carried to the grave. Death will settle down on your eyelids. The fairest face shall be pale, and the breath shall go, and the body crumble to ashes, for here we have no continuing city.

2. Life in this world is but a short preface to eternity, an inconsiderable point between two vast terms. The world lasted some thousands of years before we were born in it; and how long after we are gone, who knows; but then there is an eternity to succeed. O! that we could so tell our handbreadth of days as to apply our hearts to wisdom.

3. It is well with them who are gone to heaven. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours." Rest is desirable, they had it not here; they have got it now. Their weary days and nights are now at an end. Sickness and trouble shall be to them no more. Weep not for them, but for yourselves that are yet on the troublesome sea; we are abroad, they are at home.

4. Behold here the vanity of all things below, and the folly of valuing ourselves on account of them. When death comes, we must bid them an eternal farewell, and leave what we have to others; and they to others again, till the fire at the last day consume all. Some have a beautiful tent, others a black and uncomely one; but against night, all are taken down.

5. Their case is to be pitied and not envied, who have their portion in this life. What good did the rich man's treasure do him in hell? Though a man act the part of a king on a stage, if he have nothing when the curtain is drawn and the play ended, he is in a pitiful case. Alas! the world does with many, as with the young man, it brings an eternal eclipse on their souls.

Lastly, See the folly of men who are neglecting to secure their title to heaven. O sirs! we are quickly carried down the stream,

ere long we will be in eternity. Why then are you not making it your business to seek a continuing city, seeing here we have none?

Use 2. Of trial. Hereby you may try yourselves, whether you be truly religious or not. How does the pulse of your affections beat? What is it that you are seeking, is it heaven or the world? I told you in what this seeking consists, and upon this I would propose two questions:

1. What desires have you after heaven? Are your souls yet reconciled to it? Could you get an abode here for ever, would you desire to remove? I fear there are many would even be content to settle down on this side of Jordan. They desire heaven, but not for contempt of the world, but fear of hell. But a gracious soul cannot be content with this their sinful condition in the world, to want uninterrupted communion with God, which is only to be enjoyed above.

2. What endeavours are you using to get it? Simple wishes for heaven will never come speed. Many wish for heaven but work for hell. If this be not your main work to seek the continuing city, you will never get there. But alas! what little pains do most men take to get heaven? If coming to the church, giving the compliment of a morning and evening prayer to God—coldrife and dead suits—will bring them to heaven, they will be sure of it; but they will never see it, if they cannot reach it without cutting off right hands, mortifying their lusts, and taking it by violence.

Use 3. Of exhortation. From this I may press several duties upon you. And,

1. Be content with such things as you have. Nature is content with little, grace with less; but corruption enlarges the soul as hell, that it never says it hath enough. Though a stranger get but bad accommodation on a journey, it pleases him to think that he is going homewards, he is not to stay with it. You are on your way te eternity. It is of little consequence whether a traveller have a cane in his hand, or a rough stick; either of them may serve, and both are laid aside at the journey's end.

2. Do not sit down upon the world's smiles. If the world court you, do not give it your heart, but tell it you are not to stay. O! it is hard to keep the heart from falling in love with a smiling world; hard to carry a full cup even; to take a large draught of carnal comforts, and not to fall asleep. Ere long, the richest shall be on a level with the poorest; and when the fool, who sets his heart on his wealth, comes to die, he cannot answer the question, Whose shall these things be, which he hath provided?

3. Bear afflictions patiently. You are posting out of the place of afflictions. If you be not in Christ, ere long the cross will be

turned into an unmixed curse. If you be in Christ, ere long all tears shall be wiped away from your eyes.

4. What you do, do quickly. Beware of delays, they are very dangerous. Our great work is to do good, and to get good. Ply your work with all speed and diligence. Parents do good to your children; ere long they may be taken from you, or you from them.

Lastly, Seek the continuing city that is to come, O! set yourselves to this work in good earnest; apply to it with all diligence. Young and old, rich and poor, you must all go out of this world. O! strive to secure your lodging in heaven.

MOTIVE 1. Consider you are all seeking something. Man is a restless creature, always crying give, give. The river runs as fast when it is overflowing its banks, as when it is going in its proper channel. The watch moves as fast when it is going wrong, as when it is going right. The spider is at pains as well as the bee. Alas! many men are like the spider; it consumes its bowels to make its web. They exert themselves wholly for their bodies, and neglect their souls. O what folly is this!

2. The devil is seeking to keep you out of heaven. He is constantly seeking whom he may devour. He wants not skill to contrive means for your ruin. He hath had experience for several thousand years in that trade. He wants not malice nor cunning. And will not you be at pains for your own salvation?

3. You have loud calls to this work. You have the call of the word. Wherefore hath the Lord instituted ordinances among you, but for this end? A master doth not light a candle for his servants to play themselves at it. You are not shut up in the dark, muffled up in clouds of ignorance. The night is over, the day shines. Go forth then to your work and to your labour, until the evening. The voice of providence calls loudly to you. God seems to be on his way against these lands, for their contempt of the gospel. And, I dare say, men under the gospel cannot but sometimes have their convictions.

4. Our abode here will be very short. Ere long, all of us shall be in an unalterable state. Some are at the borders of the grave; all are going forward. Our life is a vapour, and our days a shadow that passeth away. Let us then work the works of him that sent us, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. Amen.

Simprin, March 23, 1707.

BELIEVERS COMMUNING WITH THEIR OWN HEARTS.

SERMON XXVIII.

PSALM iv. 4,

Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.

IN these words, we have David's friendly advice to his enemies, for the good of their souls. In this particular advice, there is, 1. The duty itself, "Commune with your own heart." By the heart is meant the conscience. In this sense it is used by the apostle John: "If our heart condemn us," saith he, "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." It is also said, that David's heart smote him, after that he had numbered the people. There is next a special season of the duty, upon your beds, in the night season. There is also the connection of it with the other duties here recommended. It looks backward and forward, and is here prescribed as an excellent mean to keep us from sin, and to be still from wicked practices.

DOCTRINE. As it is a necessary duty to commune with our own consciences, so it is an excellent mean to a holy life. In prosecuting this subject, I shall,

I. Shew in what the duty consists.
II. The manner in which it should be performed.
III. The special seasons for engaging in it.
IV. Give the reasons for the duty; and,
V. Shew that it is an excellent mean to a holy life. We are then,

I. To shew what it is to commune with our conscience. This duty consists in two things:

1. We must speak to our consciences. This is easily performed, for they can hear without a voice. Our tongues need not weary in this exercise; for in the deepest silence we speak best, and commune with our hearts to the greatest purpose. Thus David spoke to his heart, "O my soul," said he, "thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord."

2. We must hear our heart and conscience speak to us. "When thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart," says David, "said unto thee, (namely, to, or within me), thy face, Lord, will I seek." Con-

science can speak to us, so as to make its voice be heard through all parts of the soul. It roused David himself out of his sleep, and put Judas to his wits end. It is God's voice, and therefore must be majestic.

II. To shew the manner in which this duty should be performed.

1. We should commune with our hearts willingly. It is a work of righteousness; "and the Lord meeteth him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness." We should be willing to enter on the conference, and even seek this communing. "Isaac went out to meditate at the even-tide." It is sad when conscience speaks only unbidden. We should also continue the communing, and not, like Felix, break it off violently, saying, "when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

2. Friendly. That which most injures this communing, is people's looking on conscience as their enemy, and therefore they cannot endure it. But conscience may say to you, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" It argues a person to be of little judgment to look on the surgeon as his enemy, though he come with his lance or knife in his hand to open his sores. If conscience speak roughly, it is but to make way for a sound peace. "When I heard," says Habakkuk, "my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble."

3. We should do it freely. We must have no reserve, no sweet morsel under the tongue. It is grieving to think how averse people are to come upon some points with their conscience, and at what pains they will be to divert or change that discourse. Some sins they love, some they hate; accordingly they are content to commune, so as the conscience will but hold of these points the right eye, the right hand.

4. Honestly and uprightly, not refusing conviction, but admitting what conscience offers according to the word of God. Conscience, indeed, is but a subordinate judge, and therefore the appeal is to be made to the Scriptures. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." But alas! many refuse the very light which conscience offers from the Scriptures, and are at much pains to cheat conscience into a belief of their mistaken apprehension, as the foolish virgins deceived themselves.

5. Frequently. There is no acquaintance more difficult to be obtained, and more easily lost, than that with ourselves. The soul of man is an unfathomable deep. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" There is still

occasion for new discoveries, therefore this exercise should be habitual to us. It is one to a thousand, if we find our hearts as we left them. We are now,

III. To attend to the special seasons for communing with our hearts. It is a duty at all times, but for the more solemn performance of it, the Scripture points out the following seasons :—

1. The morning. "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning." The first fruits belong to God. The devil and the world will strive to rob him of them, as a pledge for the whole day; and alas! they often succeed. David was careful to give his first thoughts to God. "When I awake," says he, "I am still with thee." The pious women who followed our Lord, "came very early in the morning to his sepulchre." The want of this early devotion is the source of great disorders. Possession is much. It is easier to hold out, than to put out.

2. The evening. "Isaac went out to meditate at the even-tide." This is to close the day with God. There is great reason to begin and end with God. In the morning, we are to go out amidst many snares; in the evening, we have a whole day's course to examine and judge.

3. The night season, upon our beds; so says the text. And says David for himself, "when I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." Men should not go to sleep with their hearts bound to the world, as the horse to the manger. The night is especially proper for this duty, for then a man is at the end of the day's progress, and it is most meet he should then look back upon it, and observe how matters have gone that day. Again, a man is now out of the noise of the world, his converse with others is at an end, and he may, therefore, the better take a word with himself, and recollect himself freely. Besides, the bed and sleep bear a resemblance to death and the grave, and so calls upon a man to remember his latter end. The night has a kind of awful majesty with it; and seeing we know not of an awakening, we should compose ourselves to sleep, as we would do to death.

4. A time of affliction. Says Asaph, "I call to remembrance my song in the night; I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search." God sends afflictions to bring sinners back again to himself, Hosea ii. 6, 7. But when we run away from God, we run away from ourselves; and the first turning is, to turn to ourselves, to come to serious consideration, Luke xv. 17; then is it time to pose our conscience with that question, What have I done?

5. Before we go to religious duties. That this was David's practice, we may learn from his calling his prayer his meditation, Psalm v. 1. This duty of self-communing before prayer and other duties, is as the plough before the sower, to prepare the heart. That soul that takes a view of its sins, before it pray for the pardon of them, is likely to make profit, Exod. xxxii. 26, compare xxx. 31.

Lastly, After we are come from duties. It is as the harrow after the sower, to cover the seed. The beasts that did not chew the cud were unclean; and the persons who do not meditate on what they hear, and on what they do, are not likely to reap much benefit, or to reform their lives. How natural is it to a man, when he has been about a worldly business of importance, to reflect on it. Much more need is there here. We are,

IV. To give reasons why we should thus commune with ourselves.

1. Because our conscience is witness to all our actions, and keeps a record of our conversation. Our conscience also bears witness, and our thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another. Would we flee from our consciences, we must flee from ourselves. Yet alas! many will do that in secret, which they would not do before a little child. Conscience is a thousand witnesses. Good reason, then, that we commune with it.

2. It is God's deputy in the soul. If God should send one out of heaven to lodge in your family as his deputy, would you not be often communing with him. Conscience is so. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." It is our schoolmaster and household preacher, God's spy and man's overseer; as Moses was to Aaron instead of God.

3. Because its approbation is necessary for our actions. Its antecedent approbation is necessary to make our actions lawful, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" so that it is even sin to go against the conscience, though in an error; its consequent approbation is necessary to our peace. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." This is the oracle, then, within our breasts, which we must always consult.

4. Excepting only God himself, our consciences are our best friends or worst enemies. A good conscience will clear and support a man under the greatest hardships, 2 Cor. i. 12; and even in the hour of death, Isa. xxxviii. 3. Observe of king Josiah, he was slain in war, yet died in peace with God and his conscience, 2 Kings xxii. 20, compare xxiii. 29. An ill conscience will deprive us of the comfort of all other enjoyments, and fill the mind with horrible dismay, as in the case of Belshazzar. It remains,

V. To shew that this duty is an excellent mean to a holy life.

1. This appears, if we consider that the want of it is that which makes people go on securely in their sins. "I hearkened and heard, saith the Lord; but they spake not aright, no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." Sin is a work of darkness, and therefore goes on best in the dark; for to him that is in love with his sin, the morning is as the shadow of death. Therefore Satan keeps all fast, as long as he gets conscience and the man kept asunder.

2. As soon as people give ear to their consciences, they are obliged to begin a new course; "therefore, thus saith the Lord God, consider your ways." This was exemplified in the prodigal. David also says, "I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Conscience is ever a friend to holiness, even in the worst of men.

3. Conscience discovers our defects, errors, and wanderings out of God's way. To know the disease is a considerable step to the cure. When a man books his accounts, and compares his expenses with his income, it will make him spend less.

4. Conscience will point out duty, and spur a man on to it. When men are pricked in their hearts, they will cry, what shall we do. A little thinking sometimes would set resolutions in practice, and make good purposes bring forth abundantly.

Use 1. For information. We need not weary for want of company. We have a companion within us, able to hold up in profitable discourse.

2. It is great wickedness to refuse to commune with our consciences, when they offer to speak. Sometimes it speaks undesired; but men often entertain it, as did Cain, Felix, and others. Some do like these idolatrous heathens, who beat drums and raise shouts, when their children are consuming on Moloch's altar, to drown their cries.

3. They are careless souls indeed, whose religion never reacheth to their beds, farther than to desire God to have a care of them, when they wrap the clothes about them; as if their beds were sleeping places for their souls as well as bodies; hence Satan has their hearts, sleeping and waking.

4. See here why the devil is such an enemy to this duty. Why, if this conference takes place between a man and his heart, Satan's kingdom is in danger. But men sin and stand not in awe, for they commune not with their heart.

Use 2. Of exhortation. Make this your daily work. Commune with your hearts respecting what concerns your souls. The subject

is very large. You need not want matter, as commune with your heart respecting your state. "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your ownselves." Ask your souls whether or not you are born again? It is certain you were once children of wrath and of the devil. The voice may be Jacob's and the hands Esau's. Perhaps no inward change has yet taken place. Commune respecting the frame and case of your soul, whether you be sleeping or waking, growing or declining, grace in exercise or not. Commune respecting your sins. It is very unsafe to be still running on in the score, contracting debts, but never casting up your accounts. Commune where you are like to take up your eternal lodging, in heaven or hell. It is a serious question. Sit not down with an uncertainty, a mere maybe upon it, but ponder what evidences you have for heaven.

In the morning commune with your hearts on what hath passed in the night; on the goodness of God in preserving and refreshing you; what good or sinful motions have been stirred up in your sleep; on the danger on which you are when you are going out to the world, and the need you have of grace to keep you.

At night commune on what has passed through the day, looking through your hearts, lips, and lives. Ask yourselves whether you be a day's journey nearer heaven, or hell; what providences you have met with, what temptations, and the like.

Before you engage in duty, commune with your hearts respecting the majesty and greatness of God, before whom you are to appear; respecting your sins, that you may know what you have to confess; respecting your wants, that you may know what to ask; and respecting your mercies, in order to give thanks.

When you come from duties, commune respecting your behaviour in them; what success you have had; whether you have had access to God or not, whether you have received any blessings of grace or not. And rush not rashly on any project or business; but commune with your own hearts, and consult your conscience what is sin, and what is duty in particular cases. Consider,

1. That the habitual neglect of this exercise is a chief engine of Satan, to make men sleep the sleep of death. In hell, the inconsiderate rich man lift up his eyes. It is next to a desperate case which the prophet Isaiah describes: "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand."

2. The neglecting of this duty so much, is the reason why Christians are like Pharaoh's lean kine, so ill favoured. He that would keep a clean face, should often look into the glass.

Lastly, Sooner or later we must reckon with conscience, and the longer in doing it, the worse. Death and judgment are posting on. It is very dismal, indeed, to be hurried out of the world, ere we have got a serious discourse with our hearts, respecting our state and frame. Be not afraid at the difficulty of the work. If Satan be such an enemy to it, that says that it is most advantageous for the soul. Want of frequency in it makes us so averse to it, and the love to sin which must be put away. Study tenderness in your conduct and it will be sweet to you, and often wash your consciences in the blood of Christ. "This will purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God." Amen.

Simprin, August 11, 1706.

BELIEVERS LABOURING FOR THEIR REWARD.

SERMON XXIX.

HEBREWS iv. 11,

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

HERE have we no continuing city, this is not the place of our fixed abode; all men are in motion heavenward or hellward. These that are going downward, may sit still; they go with the stream, and ere long shall reach the ocean of God's wrath; these that are going upward, must row against the stream, and must be at work till they arrive at Immanuel's land. Rest here is too dear bought, at the rate of everlasting trouble. Let us, then, labour here, that we may enter into that rest which is to come. In these words, there is, *First*, An exhortation: *Second*, A motive pressing it.

In the exhortation we may consider: 1. The dependence of it upon what goes before, intimated in the particle *therefore;* shewing that it is an inference from some preceding doctrine. In the latter part of the third chapter, he shews that unbelief kept the disobedient Israelites out of God's rest; both out of Canaan, and heaven typified thereby, chap. iv.

1. He lets them see, that they had an offer of that eternal rest, as well as the Israelites in the wilderness had; because both had the

gospel, only the Israelites in the wilderness did not believe it, ver. 2. He proves there was a rest remaining for the people of God, from ver. 3; and lays down the conclusion, ver. 9. This he confirms ver. 10, which some understand of believers, and these go two ways: 1. Some take it for these that are now in heaven, who cease there from sin. 2. Some take it for believers on earth, who are in the way to eternal rest, and so have in part ceased from sin. Others understand it of Christ, of whose exaltation he speaks, chap i. 3, and frequently in this epistle. Christ, as the believer's head, is entered into heaven, he has gone there as our forerunner, and has now ceased from the work of redemption, finished on the cross, even as God rested on the seventh day from his work of creation. This I take to be very probable. From the whole, he doth most natively infer the exhortation in the text.

2. The great thing which we should have in our eye, that rest, namely, of which David speaks, Psal. xcv. 11; that rest which remains, ver. 9. The apostle shews, that the rest of which David spoke was not the rest of the Sabbath; for that rest of the Sabbath, in which God ceased from the work of creation, was long since over and gone; the rest which David means, was not so, ver. 3—7. Neither was it the rest of Canaan, given the people by Joshua, for the same reason, ver. 8; therefore, it is a rest yet to come, and that peculiar to the people of God. This rest is nothing else but heaven, or the state of glory, which the Lord gives to his people, being taken out of this world. It is eternal life, Rev. xiv. 13. This is that rest from which unbelievers are excluded, Heb. iii. 19.

3. What we are to aim at, in reference to that rest; "to enter into it;" that is, to be partakers of it. The reason of this phrase is, that heaven and eternal life is ordinarily held out by a garden or paradise, a house, a city, a kingdom, into which we are to enter by certain ways, posts, and doors. By grace we come to glory.

4. The means to be used, in order to our entering, is labouring. Labour we must, for heaven will not fall down into our mouths, while lying on the bed of sloth. They that will not work, must not eat bread in the kingdom of God. Drinking of the rivers of pleasures, which are at God's right hand, is reserved for labourers only, not for loiterers. The Greek word is very emphatical, and signifies labouring with intenseness of mind, carefulness, and haste; accordingly it is diversely translated. It primarily denotes haste, Mark vi. 25. That which people hasten, after they are intent upon it; so we may better understand that, Mark vi. 25, "She went in εὐθέως, *straightway* (denoting haste,) μετὰ σπουδῆς, *with haste;*" (denoting the intenseness of her mind on the thing.) They also go vigour-

ously about it, sparing no pains, and exert to their utmost. Hence, 2 Pet. i. 10, the word is rendered, *give diligence.* They are also very solicitous and careful that they may not lose it. Hence, 2 Pet. i. 15, it is rendered, *I will endeavour;* see also 2 Cor. viii. 16. The apostle, then, having made choice of this Greek word, we may improve it in its full extent, without stretching it beyond his intention.

5. Observe the order of the labour and the rest. In the way of God's appointment, and of the godly's choice, the labour is first, then comes the rest. It is quite contrary with the wicked. The Chaldeans measured their natural day otherwise than the Israelites. They put the day first, then the night; the Jews counted the night first, then the day follows. So the wicked begin with a day of rest, and end with eternal toil; the godly begin with a night of toil, and end, or rather continue in eternal rest. O that we may follow God's order!

6. Observe the end and design of this labour, it is *rest.* Men work in their young days, and lay up, that they may rest in old age. So does the Christian. The wicked also labour that they may rest; but there is a vast difference both betwixt their labour and rest. Their labour is in sin, and their rest is there; but sought in vain, "for in the fulness of their sufficiency they are in straits." But the godly have their labour in grace, their rest in glory, and between these there is an infallible connection; who, then, would refuse that labour, which ends in that rest.

7. The persons exhorted to labour; *us,* which includes the apostle and all the Hebrews, whom he exhorts to-day to hear God's voice, and whom he alarms by the example of the ruin of their predecessors; so that this exhortation belongs to all the visible church, godly and ungodly. Some have entered the avenue leading to glory, some have not; both are called to labour to enter.

2. The motive pressing the exhortation. It is taken from the danger of not labouring. Consider here,

1. That of which people are in danger, and which will come upon them, if they labour not to enter, *falling;* that is, falling short of heaven, and missing salvation. He hath a respect to the people's falling in the wilderness, being destroyed there, so as they could never reach Canaan, Heb. iii. 17; so shall all slothful persons fall with respect to heaven.

2. The great cause of ruin, that is, unbelief or unpersuasibleness. Unbelief is the great cause of the ruin of the hearers of the gospel, and that which cuts the sinews of true diligence, so as people under the power of it cannot labour.

3. A confirmation of the certainty of their ruin; "after the same example of unbelief." Others read, "into the same example;" as if he had said, lest they be a sad example of divine vengeance to others, as the Israelites were before them. But our own reading is most agreeable to the scope; as if he had said, lest they fall as the Israelites did, and split on the same rock. There are examples of imitation, these we want not; and examples of caution and warning, such were the Israelites in the wilderness.

4. The universality of the danger; *any man*. No man is out of hazard for none that labour not can stand.

5. The connection of this with the exhortation; *lest any man;* (Greek,) that none may fall; importing that the hazard of falling short of heaven ought to quicken our endeavours after salvation.

Doctrines. I. Heaven is a rest, into which those that now labour for it shall be at length received.

II. It is the necessary duty of all that hear the gospel, to labour to enter into that rest. I shall begin with this second doctrine. In handling this, I shall,

I. Shew what it is to labour, or in what the Christian's labour consists.

II. For what it is that we are to labour.

III. How we should labour.

IV. That we must labour, in order to our entering into rest.

V. Why we must labour in this spiritual work in order to our entering heaven. I am then,

I. To shew what it is to labour, or in what the Christian's labour consists.

I take up this, in these four things hinted in the explanation of the words:

1. The mind must be intent on the business of salvation. There must be a serious bending of the soul to it and application of the mind, as he that is labouring to gain a city by storm. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Heaven is a rest for the soul, and therefore the soul must be at work before it come there. Mere bodily labour profits nothing here, for it is not of that kind of work that may be carried on without application of mind. Toys and trifles may be so managed, but weighty business cannot. Here the mind must be intent on the end, that is, the rest. Heaven must be in the eye. So was it with our forerunner: "For the joy set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame." The man that is on a journey applies his mind to his journey's end, and often sees it before he comes at it.

He that intends to take a city fixeth his mind on it, and will not be diverted from his purpose; so is it with him that labours for salvation. The mind must also be intent on the means that lead to the end. It is entering for which he labours. No man can be accounted a labourer for a good crop, who neglects the ploughing and sowing of his ground; and the means leading to salvation are such as will not be effectual without the mind be intent on them. "Strive," says our Saviour, "to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Now this application of the mind to the business of salvation imports, 1. An impression of the weight of that matter upon the spirit. No wise man will labour for a trifle; and no man will labour for salvation, but he that hath a deep impression of its importance; hence is it that so few labour this way. Most men are at no tolerable pains about their salvation. Some will not want an hour's rest for salvation, that will want a whole night's rest for something of the world. The reason is plain; the world appears great, and heaven little in their eyes; therefore men's hearts must be pricked, that their sense of feeling may be raised, ere they will be solicitous about their salvation. There are two things that make salvation weigh with them. There is first a treasure of wrath on the one hand, Rom. ii. 5, which is growing daily, by the increase of sin. The cup of wrath seems to them too full, that they should be able to drink it off. The vengeance of God appears a load too great for their shoulders, hence they are ready to say, who can abide with everlasting burning. A second thing is a weight of glory on the other hand, 2 Cor. iv. 13. Here they see in what true happiness consists. Will a weight of gold make a sluggard labour; and will not a weight of glory, seen by an eye of faith, make a Christian labour. This application imports, 2. An habitual minding of that business. Religion is the believer's trade, hence his conversation is in heaven. As for others, the curse of the serpent is upon them, on their belly do they go, licking the dust of the earth; and when the frame of the new creature is such, that it looks heavenward natively, the unrenewed, like the beasts, continually look down; "their God is their belly, and they mind earthly things." They labour for the meat that perisheth, and will not seek after God. But if salvation be our study, it will be often in our thoughts; and the question that occupies our attention will not be, who will shew us any good? but that, what shall we do to be saved? In this application of the mind, there is, 3. The heart's being set upon salvation, 2 Cor. v. 9. The scattered affections of the soul are gathered together from off the variety of objects which the world affords us, and are

fixed here, Psal. xxvii. 4. Most men cannot labour for salvation, because they run themselves out of breath in pursuit of the world; hence a twofold evil follows for their souls. 1. A great aversion to the duties of religion and the concerns of the soul. The full soul loatheth an honey-comb; as a man that has filled himself in his own house, has no appetite for the feast to which he is invited, and the more so, if new come off a journey, and worn out with fatigue; hence the man, if he go to duty, he is dragged to it. 2. Unfitness for duties of religion. The cream and life of the man's affections are already spent on the world and his lusts, so that nothing is left for God and his soul but the lame and the sick, so that he cannot labour, and so must lose, unless some faint attempts will do the business.

But if we would labour for salvation, we must draw our hearts to the work, from off other objects; salvation will be our great desire, and with Mary we will choose the better part; our hearts will draw our hands to work. It is true, even the wicked desire salvation, but there are these defects in their desires of it, 1. They are nature's own work; they come up without the overcoming power of the Spirit of Christ. They are like weeds and wild oats, that grow without ploughing or sowing; nothing of that mighty power there, Eph. i. 19, hence they cannot actuate a man to supernatural duties, for these are beyond their sphere. 2. His desires overleap the true means. He loves the gold, but he cannot endure to dig. He loves to reap, but he cannot endure to plough, because of the cold. 3. He desires it absolutely, but not comparatively. Give him sin and safety, too, they are welcome; but he will rather make shipwreck of his soul, than part with his lusts; but he that hath his heart set on salvation, will part with all to gain it, Matth. xiii. 45, 46.

2. In this labour there is painfulness and diligence. He doth not only think on it, but work for it; his desires are backed with suitable endeavours. We must not sit down and wish for heaven with folded hands. These desires are, like Rachel, beautiful indeed, but barren. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." There must be true pains here, and vigorous endeavours, that will make the soul to breathe, and pant and sweat, to obtain the desired salvation; and this implies the engaging with the duties of religion, as the way to heaven. If we mind for heaven, we must go in the path road, following the footsteps of the flock, Heb. xii. 14. They that do not labour at God's work, cannot expect his rest. It implies also, that no mean must be left unemployed, in order to the attaining of salvation; it is a matter of life and death, and all that a man hath he will give for his life. They that labour for salvation will seek everywhere, and turn every stone, till they find it. He is a painful

Christian, not he that will do some things, with Herod; but he that will not refuse the hardest piece of work, in order to the obtaining of his desire. Sloth may well carry a man half way to heaven, but the laborious Christian leaves the sluggard by the way, for this diligence also implies constancy in the way of the Lord. A Christian must be always employed. Salvation is a web, into which we must weave the whole thread of our lives. The man that minds for heaven, is a labourer indeed, whose work is never at an end, till he enter to his eternal rest. He can never want work as long as he is out of heaven, and as long as there is a devil and an ill heart to interrupt his work. It is the mark of a hypocrite, that he will not delight himself in the Almighty, nor always call upon God. Many professors are no more labourers for heaven, than a man who will occasionally, for his diversion, go to take hold of a plough is a ploughman. Religion is not their chief business. *Finally*, this diligence implies real vigour; whatsoever they do, they do it with all their might: "They search for wisdom, as for hid treasures." There is a following of the Lord fully, over the belly of all oppositions and discouragements. The man labours for salvation, as working for his life itself, for indeed he sees his all is at stake. No opposition will make him give over; if he faint he will rise again, and more vigorously renew the attack. There is such a faintness in all the endeavours of many for heaven, that with the fearful who have no heart, they are excluded; Rev. xxi. 8.

3. In this labour there is haste. Our work must be done speedily, for the time proposed for our labouring is but to-day. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice." There is an unbelieving haste, that will not wait God's time; but this true haste is not to let his time slip. Delays are dangerous in all matters, but damnable in soul matters; therefore David would not venture on it, but says, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Therefore, says the apostle, labour with all haste to enter into that rest.

Objection. But how can one haste to heaven, can he go there before death, or must he hasten his own death? Answer. No. But the way is long, and the entry to it is far out of our natural way. We must hasten by a speedy entrance upon the way to it, by a speedy conversion to God. They that are near conversion, are said, "not to be far from the kingdom of God." They who forsake the world lying in wickedness, have to enter into that rest, and get into the avenue of grace, from whence they shall certainly reach glory. We must also make haste, by a speedy progress in the way. There are many steps betwixt us and heaven. We have need to go forward, and work out our begun sal-

vation with fear and trembling. There are many corruptions to mortify, and graces to strengthen. Two things make men that are wise labour with haste: 1. Time is flying. "Our days are swifter than a post; they flee away;" and when gone, cannot be recalled. Time is bald in the hind head. That which was, will be no more. Yesterday has taken its eternal farewell. The candle that is burnt out to snuff, cannot be lighted again. No medicine will cure that wound, no oratory will persuade it to return; crowns and kingdoms will not buy it back again. Time past is out of their power, the time to come is not theirs. Their only time is the present, what wonder then they make haste. 2. Death is approaching, and there is no return from it back again to this life, to rectify what was formerly done amiss, Job xiv. 14. There is no place for labouring there, Eccles. ix. 10; heaven and hell are for other work than this. If the infant come to the world dead, the open world will not revive him; and if death catch the soul idle, it shall never have occasion to labour more, but under the wrath of God.

4. There is in this labour carefulness and holy anxiety about salvation, in the managing of the work, Philip. ii. 12. Now this implies, 1. The turning of the soul from anxious cares about the world, to a holy solicitude about the salvation of the soul. When a man begins to labour for heaven, "who will shew us any good?" is turned to, "what shall I do to be saved?" For the man now knows that truth, "what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The mind of man is too narrow to be taken up about two such different objects at the same time. No man can serve two masters. We may as well at once grasp heaven and earth in our arms, as be solicitous about both. It implies also a fear of falling short of heaven. I do not mean a fear of despondency, for that cuts off labouring, and it is hope that feeds these labourers; nor yet a doubtfulness as to the event, as when a man is racked with doubts, whether he shall be saved or damned. This indeed is the man's case, when the Lord begins first to deal with him, and is of good use to stir him up to labour; for here is fear mixed with hope, and it is the work of the Spirit of God, Rom. viii. 15. This is also the case of the people of God sometimes after conversion; but this doubting is not their duty then, as not being from God's Spirit, "for they have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." But that in the text is urged as duty, and there is a fear of falling short competent to assured Christians, Heb. iv. 1, which is a spur to diligence. So Paul, 2 Cor. v. 1—11. Noah had a promise of safety, yet "was he moved with fear," Heb. xi. 7.

They ought to fear the thing, as Noah did the deluge; so as to

avoid every thing that may expose them to it, and to do every thing that may contribute to their safety. It is not kindly assurance, but carnal presumption that makes a man like the leviathan, to count darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of the spear. No, he that seriously considers the power of God's wrath, and that it is in itself possible for him to perish, must needs tremble at the thought of hell, and run to Christ, who alone can deliver him from the wrath to come. That God can destroy both soul and body in hell, though he will not, is enough to make the heart quake.

It implies likewise, an earnest desire to be set and kept on the way to heaven. Men may labour to little purpose, if they be not on the right way. "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." And when there are so many byeways whose end is destruction, the thoughts of this must needs make the soul anxious to know where he is, and therefore he will be consulting the way-marks, examining his way, and striving to steer his course to the right or left hand, according as he may be directed by his counsellors. He may come to several steps in the way, with which he is not acquainted; these will put him to a stand, not knowing to what hand to turn himself, whether that be present duty or sin, but then he will lift his eyes to the Lord for direction, Jer. x. 23; Prov. iii. 6; whereas others ramble forward at random, and fall, to their ruin. There is here also a fear of mismanagement in his work. The labourer for heaven should work, and doth best work with a trembling hand. It was the fundamental maxim of the heathen moralists, have confidence in yourself. But I may say the Christian maxim is, have no confidence in yourself. He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool. This makes them circumspect to forecast dangers, to walk warily, like a child beginning to walk, or a man recovering of a broken leg, Isa. xxxviii. 15. They have an anxious heart and earnest care about their work, seeing they work for eternity. We now proceed,

II. To shew for what we are to labour. It is to enter into the heavenly rest. This is that which we are to have in our eye, and to which our endeavours are to be directed. We are not called to work for nought; but as heaven is attainable, we are to labour that we may enter into it. In speaking to this, I shall,

I. Shew some Scriptural notions of heaven, to which this of entering doth agree.

II. What it is to enter into the heavenly rest.

III. Some steps in the way, by which we must labour to enter.

IV. I shall consider this labouring to enter, as it respects our preparation for heaven. I am then,

I. To shew some Scriptural notions of heaven, to which this of entering doth agree.

1. Heaven is held out under the notion of a garden or paradise. "Jesus said to the thief on the cross, to-day, shalt thou be with me in paradise." Sinless Adam lived in the earthly paradise, sinless saints shall live in the heavenly. It is a paradise for pleasures, in it "are rivers of pleasures." Not one, but many Edens or pleasures. Here is the tree of life, and on this tree are fruits in the greatest variety, abundance, and excellence. We live now in a wilderness, we are to labour to enter into a paradise.

2. A house. "We have a building of God," says Paul, "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Solomon built a magnificent house for Pharaoh's daughter; heaven is that glorious house which Christ the true Solomon hath gone to prepare for his people. It is his father's house, even the house of his kingdom; a house in which there are many mansions fitted up for receiving all that ever shall come there; and though not all, nay though not the most now present, shall ever come to it; it is not for want of room, but for want of labouring to enter into it, for it hath a straight gate that discourageth many.

3. The temple typified by that at Jerusalem. "Christ entered not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." It is called the tabernacle, Rev. xxi. 3; yea, the holiest, Heb. x. 19, 20. Canaan was the glory of the world; Jerusalem was the glory of Canaan, and the temple was the glory of Jerusalem. Now all these are a ruinous heap; but no change here, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." How did the saints of old value the tabernacle and temple, but as they were only shadows of the heavenly. In it, we shall have Christ the true ark, in whom the law is fulfilled; the cherubims; the society of angels; the golden candlestick; yea, the Lamb is the light thereof; the incense altar Christ, by whom we are made priests to God, Rev. i. 6; the table, in communion with God. Into this temple it is that we are to labour to enter.

4. A city glorious for magnificence and beauty, largely described, Rev. xxi. The saints in glory are not penned up in a garden, house, or temple; but walk at liberty in a city which God hath prepared for them, Heb. xi. 16. This is the city of the living God, which shall never see ruins; here there is no hazard from within, no danger from without, Rev. xxi. 25, 27. Into this city must we labour to enter, there to dwell as citizens for ever.

5. A country; even a better country than the best here below,

Heb. xi. 16. What toil did the Israelites undergo, that they might enter into, and possess Canaan! Behold you are called to labour for a heavenly country, in which nothing is wanting. This is the country in which we are but sojourners, but heaven is a country where we may live for ever at rest.

6. A kingdom, Matt. xxv. 34; a kingdom that cannot be moved, Heb. xi. 28. The best kingdoms on earth are liable to sad convulsions and shakings, but here is no hazard. Sin is not there; no vapours inclosed in the bowels of the earth, to make an earthquake there; and no violence can come from without. Here all the subjects are kings, each with a crown on his head. What need of penal laws here, where none of the subjects can ever err? Who would refuse any labour to enter into this kingdom, where they shall be welcome to the best of it, even to the throne, Rev. iii. 21. We are,

II. To shew what it is to enter into the heavenly rest. There is a fivefold entering into heaven and life, for which we must labour.

I. There is an entering into heaven by the covenant. The covenant of grace is the outer court of heaven. Of this everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, David says, "this is all my salvation and all my desire." Surely, then, heaven was in it. The covenant is the chariot in which Christ carries his people to glory. This chariot cannot stop by the way, so that they who are once in it, shall as surely come there, as if they were there already. They "are in hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie promised before the world began." So then we must labour to be within the bond of the covenant. Faint wishes will not carry you up into it. But, 1. You must close with Christ; make up the match deliberately and sincerely betwixt Christ and your souls. Take hold of Christ, and you take hold of the covenant, Isa. xlii. 6, and xxvii. 5. You must, 2. Break covenant with your lusts, saying, with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Many pretend to have covenanted with God at communions; but it plainly appears, that of the chariot in which they are, the devil is the driver; for they are a stain to religion, and cannot resist temptations, "but are taken captive by the devil at his will." No wonder that persons hasten after other gods, when the devil drives them. Quit them we must, or quit the covenant, and so quit heaven.

2. There is an entering by faith. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is the very being of things hoped for, it realizeth these things that to us, as yet, have no being. Now we enter into heaven two ways by faith: 1. In so far as faith lays hold upon Christ, and unites us

to him, John vi. 54. Faith embracing Christ, enfolds heaven, for he is eternal life; "He is the true God, and eternal life." Faith makes us one with Christ, who is now in heaven; in respect of which union, the apostle doubts not to say, that believers are in heaven already. "God," says he, "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." The new and living way is the only way which faith treads. Labour then for true faith, and an interest in Christ thereby. Never satisfy yourself with a faith of a lower efficacy. Say not you cannot believe, the great defect is in your will. "Ye will not come to me," says Jesus, "that ye may have life." Stretch out the withered hand to Christ; protest you shall never be satisfied till he put forth mighty power to make you believe, and never quit the throne till you get it, if you should dig your grave at it, Luke xviii. 39—43. 2. In so far as faith lays hold on the promise in which heaven is wrapped up. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." Embraced them, that is, the things contained in them. An allusion to mariners, who when they see the land, though afar off, yet joyfully salute it. God's word is as good security as actual possession. And as men, by charter and seisine, may enter into possession of lands which they never saw, so the believer by faith may get possession of heaven. Labour we then to get hold of the promise by faith, which we must do by taking hold of Christ; "for in him all the promises are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us."

3. There is an entering by hope. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail." Therefore salvation is attributed to hope, Rom. viii. 24. Faith goes out as a conqueror, and hope divides the spoil. Ask these that have been plunged in despair, and they will tell you that they were in hell, even when on earth. Despair brings up hell into the earth, and hope brings down heaven. Hope is indeed enjoyment anticipated, and excites the same joy, delight, and complacency, that enjoyment doth, as you may see in things of the world; only the difference is, in worldly things, the expectation is sweeter than the enjoyment; in heavenly things, it is the reverse. We must then labour for this well grounded hope, that the Spirit of God causeth us to place on his word, and that purifieth the heart. Hope of heaven, is compared to a building founded upon a rock, Matth. vii. 24; and this is a building on which true pains must be taken: 1. In pulling down the old. It is no easy thing to get down the old hopes, and to clear the foundation, leaving not one stone

upon another. This is hard work, many times ministers batter at it, and still it stands, till God himself comes up, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; oftentimes it is never pulled down, till death come and batter it down. Like the mole, they will never open their eyes, till they come to die, Luke xvi. 23. But down it must be, for there is no building sure upon the old foundation, Luke xv. 17. Again, true pains must be taken in rearing up the new. It is as easy for many now to hope for salvation as it is to breathe, the reason is, they are both nature's fruit. But were once the old hopes gone, it will not be easy to get up the new. It is as in the case of a malefactor with the rope about his neck, laying his head over the ladder, and one tells him of a pardon; how hard is it to hope or believe till he see it, and sometimes the Lord does not suddenly let them see it. Ah! the brand is in the fire, how hardly can it think to escape; what a conflict, then, between hope and despair!

Objection. Better then we hold as we are. Answer. At best you will not hold long at it, for, 1. God may make thy life in sin a hell to thee, thy name Magor Missabib. He can wrap these filthy garments of thy sin in brimstone, and then set them on fire about thine ears, as in the case of Judas. It is with the consciences of the wicked, as with iron out of the fire a little; which you would not suspect to be hot, till some water be poured on it, then it appears hot by its hissing noise; so when some drops of wrath fall on a guilty conscience, the noise will be dreadful.

Again, were thy hopes fixed with bands of iron and brass, and their foundation as deep as the centre of the earth, death will make such an earthquake in thy soul, as shall not leave one stone upon another, but shall cast it out, and sink it in the bottomless gulf of eternal despair, Job xviii. 14. Once more, in keeping it up, it is easy to many to keep up their hopes, because their hope is another tower of Babel, raised up against heaven, where the devil is master builder, and down it shall not go, if the powers of hell can hold it up; but the new godly hope is a fort built against the inroads of Satan, which therefore the devil will not cease to attack. It must stand against rains, floods, winds, Matth. vii. 25. Sometimes the child of God is ready to surrender, and to cast away his confidence. Sometimes it is ready to be taken with strong hand, Lament. iii. 18. David found this work not easy, Psal. xlii. Labour then we must, thus to enter.

4. There is an entering by obedience. "I know," said Jesus, "that his commandment is life everlasting." There is a personal way to heaven, that is, Christ. "I am," saith he, "the way." Also a real way to heaven, that is, the commands of God, called everlasting life,

because they certainly land the soul in heaven, and there is an infallible connection betwixt true obedience and glory. Christ is a captain as well as a Saviour, a king as well as a priest, and must be obeyed as well as believed in, Heb. v. 9. They that would enter heaven, but not by the way of obedience, must resolve to get in over the walls, but come not in by the door; that is, they shall never see it; "for without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We must follow the footsteps of our blessed Lord and the flock, who all entered heaven this way; though in different respects, he by, and they in, obedience. Here then we must labour to enter, and it is not every sort of obedience that is the entry to heaven. There must be labour, and it will cost true pains: 1. To fall upon the way of true obedience. For alas! many do much, but to no purpose. "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." It is not easy to fall on the way of universal obedience, to have respect to all God's commandments. How much labour do some take in running to sermons, communions, prayers, and yet still out of this way. Still it remains true, one thing he lacketh. Some one or more lusts still keep their ground, though he makes them change their name, and calls them infirmities, while indeed they are reigning sins, because his heart is knit to them. So deceitful are our hearts, that we have great need to labour to fall on this way. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments."

Nor is it easy to fall on the way of gospel obedience. One man takes up himself when he comes to age, or to get a family. Another gets his conscience alarmed, and he can get no rest till he turn over a new leaf. Another has been under sore pangs and throws, but like Ishmael, he is born before the time of the promise, and his law wounds get a law plaster. And thus they hold on, seeking to enter heaven by the gate of law obedience, which, like the east gate of the sanctuary, Ezek. xliv. 2, is inaccessible. But we should labour to fall on the way of the gospel, where the wheels of the soul are oiled with love, Heb. vi. 10; and faith and a renewed heart are the springs of obedience, and the glory of God the chief end.

Again, it is not easy to hold on the way of obedience. Some seem to walk with Christ a while, who at last turn apostates, John vi. 66. Some fall off into the ditch of profanity, others into formality. Sometimes they are sprightly professors, but at last, like worn out horses, they fall down in the way, serving for nothing but stumbling-blocks to the blind. Their hearts grow cold, their affections wither, their consciences become stupid, and at length they are cut off, and cast over the hedge. To hold on, then, in the way, is one thing

for which we must labour; for while we are on it, we will have the wind in our face, and it will be much if we be not made either to sit down or go backward, and so create new work to ourselves.

Lastly, There is an entering into heaven by actual possession, which in respect of our souls is at death, and in respect of our bodies will be at the resurrection, which is the full and final entry, to which all the rest are subservient. This entrance is that solemn entering into the king's palace, Psal. xlv. 15, which shall also be most joyful. "For the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." They shall have angels to carry their souls to Abraham's bosom, Luke xvi. 22, and shall enter heaven as a bride going into the marriage chamber, Matth. xxv. 10, where the marriage shall be solemnized through all eternity. Then comes the time when the children of God, cast out of the earthly paradise by sin, enter the heavenly, when they shall bid farewell to the cottages of clay, and enter into the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Then these priests enter the holiest of all; come into their city, and their native country, and enter as heirs to their kingdom, their minority being overpast. We proceed,

III. To mention some steps in the way, by which we must labour to enter.

1. We must labour to get grace; this is the first step. "Let us have grace," says Paul, "whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." There is a ladder by which we must mount to heaven. The black state of nature, is the ground on which all men were once standing; grace is the first remove, the first step of the ladder. The man has now no other power, but the power of nature, but hereby he ought to labour, to get grace. This is plain from Scripture, where the unregenerate are commanded "to make them a new heart," Ezek. xviii. 31, "to circumcise themselves to the Lord," Jer. iv. 4; Deut. x. 16; "and to labour for the meat which endureth to everlasting life." Though God's commands are not the measure of our strength, yet they are the measure of our duty.

This must needs be the first step; but many overlook this, and so lose all their pains. They endeavour to perform duties for salvation, but neither for grace, nor from grace. This makes all their attempts for heaven vain and fruitless, for they still leave the soul in the same state of condemnation and enmity to God as before; for as they can never atone for one sin, so they can never mortify one lust; only grace can mortify corruption. It also makes their

attempts faint and languid, and at last they are ready to give over. Duties never flow freely from that soul, where grace is not as a fountain to supply them. They are like the wick in the lamp, that burns away quickly, where there is no oil about it, Matth. xxv.; Job xxvii. 10. Now to get up this step is not easy, there must be labour at it. It is a rising out of the grave; it is a casting off of nature, and getting on a new nature; it is a second birth, which will not be without pangs, and throws, and struggles. OBJECTION. But we cannot work grace in ourselves. ANSWER. Though you cannot sow the seed, yet you may prepare the ground, Jer. iv. 3. You may examine your state; you may see you have no grace, yourself lost and undone without it, which may break and rend your hearts; and you may strongly desire it, and cry for it importunately, and never take rest till you get it; and when you are doing thus, God may do for you what you cannot do for yourselves, even he who is found of them that seek him not. But if you do not do thus, you will be condemned for contempt of grace, as well as for the want of it; and it will be a worm in your conscience in hell, that you did not do what you might have done for the getting of grace, and that you began your work at the wrong end. It is true, we cannot say God has obliged himself to give grace to such, but there is a possibility of success, which in such a case must determine any man to the work that acts rationally, as in the case of the lepers at the gate of Samaria. There is a probability of it, also, from the merciful nature of God, his surprising souls with converting grace; and never was there any who were so taken up for grace, that ever we heard did not obtain it.

2. We must labour to exercise grace in the gracious performance of duties. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." As the former step sets us on the way, this carries us forward in it. It is not enough to get grace, but we must make use of it. Grace is an active principle. Some gracious souls fall asleep in the way, but they must awake, rise again, and fall to work. And to do this will cost labour and pains, for often the temper of the body is a great hindrance to the exercise of grace. Some have a cheerful, light temper to struggle with, so that it is hard for them to exercise godly sorrow; some a melancholy temper, so that it is hard for them to believe and rejoice in Christ; there is likewise always a mixture of the contrary corruption, which will be active in the soul: "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Satan also is a great enemy to the exercise of grace, if he cannot kill the man he will endeavour to set him asleep.

A third step; growing in grace. This we must labour for. Grow in grace is the divine command. It is the Christian's great work to be going forward from strength to strength, still to be adding a cubit to his spiritual stature, till he come to the measure of a perfect man in Christ. This also will cost labour. It will not be easy to get a warmer love, stronger faith, deeper humility. This will require much travelling betwixt heaven and earth for supply; much watchfulness over what we have obtained. See how Paul expresseth it under the notion of running a race, Phil. iii. 13, 14.

A fourth step; assurance of grace and glory. For this we should labour. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." This will enable us to say, "we know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day." In this way we may also know the things freely given us of God. This will cost labour, even to climb up to this top of Pisgah, to get a sight of the land afar off. There must be pains here, to walk closely with God, examine our hearts, apply our case to the Scripture, and to wrestle for the testimony of the Spirit.

Lastly, Perseverance in grace to the end; for only such shall be saved. This will cost labour to hold out all the days of your life, and never to quit God's way while you live, but to live in the Lord always, till you come to die in him.

IV. I shall consider this labouring to enter, as it has a respect to our preparation for that eternal rest in heaven.

The man that is to go abroad is a busy man, putting all things in order for his voyage; and he that is making for his night's rest in bed, is not idle; and he that is to enter into the possession of eternal rest, has much work on his hand preparatory thereto. And thus to labour to enter into the heavenly rest implies,

1. The solid faith of eternal life, even of this truth, "that there remaineth a rest for the people of God." He that is thus labouring, has a firm persuasion, that his rest is not here; but that he must go over Jordan, and that there is certainly a rest in the other world.

2. A sincere desire to be partaker of that rest, after this troublesome life is over. He is one that looks for Christ's appearance, and waits till his change come, earnestly desiring to be admitted into that rest.

3. Resolute endeavours to enter there, by God's own way, which has already been described.

4. Frequent thoughts of that eternal rest. It is often in his mind. He looks on himself as a pilgrim and stranger, and one posting away to his unalterable state. Thus the man is put on to make all ready for that voyage. Now if we would do this, we must,

1. Labour to get our hearts more and more loosed from sin. Heaven's gate is strait, it will not take in a man with a burden of sin upon his back. A camel may as soon go through the eye of a needle, as a man with a load of unmortified corruption on his back enter heaven. If it be on his back, yet if it be loose, it will then fall off, and he will get in; like Joseph, he will escape, leaving his mantle behind him, which hangs loose on his shoulders. Sin is fastened in our souls by nature, as with bands of iron and brass. Converting grace looses it at the root, but it must be loosed more and more, by the daily practice of mortification. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

2. We must labour to keep a pure conscience. "And herein," said Paul, "do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men." As a man will labour to have his accounts cleared, and to lay down a way for the payment of his debts, who is to go off the country, never to return. The want of this, makes many of God's children to cry that death would not sist execution. For, as the man whose stomach is gnawing with hunger, is not meet to go to bed; so the man whose conscience is oppressed with guilt, is not meet for entering into the rest of heaven. This will be a continual labour to you. Two things are to be done for this purpose: 1. You must labour to keep yourselves from all sin, so far as is possible. 2. Because it is impossible to keep from it perfectly, therefore you must be making continual recourse to the blood of Christ. Make particular application for those sins that wound the conscience, and for daily infirmities that are past knowledge or counting. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."

3. Labour to keep waking and waiting for your transportation into that rest, Luke xii. 35—37. The elect of God are not fit for that rest, while they lie with the world in wickedness, therefore God sends them converting grace; he makes a stir in their souls, that they cannot rest, till they have some evidence that Christ is theirs. But ordinarily, after this they fall asleep, Matth. xxv. 5; therefore there is a new labour to get out of this security. The day was, when thou couldst not sleep without some evidence of the Lord's love; but now thou thinkest the main work is done, and thou hast yet much time, so art not waiting. O! but a surprise in this matter is heavy; if death finds thee asleep when it comes and arrests thee on a bed, thou mayest be saved, yet so as by fire. Labour, therefore, with old Simeon, to wait for the consolation of Israel, and then thou

shalt meet death with a song. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." Waiting for this rest hath a twofold advantage. It makes a man diligent in making all ready for his departure. The wise virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. They that have truly learned to number their days, will apply their hearts unto wisdom. The servant that is thinking his Lord delays his coming, will eat and drink with the drunken. Again, this waiting makes a man welcome the grim messenger, and embrace death in his arms, Job xiv. 14, 15. So that though nature cannot but shiver at the first sight of such an enemy to nature; yet faith beholding its commission, will salute it with old Simeon, Luke ii. 29. The soul will see Christ at the back of the messenger, and so say, "This is our God, we have waited for him."

4. To keep up communion with God in duties, and in the constant course of our lives. This is to have a heaven on earth. "Our conversation is in heaven." The philosophers say well, that happiness consists in operation. Heaven is not a rest in idleness, but a working rest. We should then labour to inure ourselves to the work which we are to have above. In this world, we are as it were apprentices at the trade of communion with God, that when our time is out, we may set up in the New Jerusalem; for there is working, "there they rest not day nor night." There remains, says the apostle, Heb. iv. 9, a rest; the keeping of a Sabbath, which is no idle day to those that are spiritual. Here is work for you; you have your trial-piece to make, O Christians! Try now the singing of one of Zion's songs in a strange land.

5. To get our hearts weaned from the world. The man that is going abroad, he is busy taking leave of his friends. Christ has given you the first call already, that you may take leave of them all. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me, from Lebanon." Let it not then be to do, when the next call comes. When the corn forsakes the ground, it is ready for the hook; and when the apple is ripe, a little shake makes it with ease fall from the tree. It will not be easy to get our hearts weaned from the world, for we are born with it in our hearts. Only sovereign grace can make such an earthquake in the soul as will shake it out. Labour to be loosed even from lawful enjoyments, to be crucified to them, Gal. vi. 14; and while you use them, do it with fear, like the dogs of Egypt, who, when they come to the Nile, lap their water, running for fear of the crocodiles in the river.

6. Labour to despatch the work of your day and generation with all speed. There is a twofold work we have to do. 1. Our salvation work. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trem-

bling." This must be despatched. Of this we have spoken before. 2. The work of our day and generation, Acts xiii. 36. The former respects our eternal salvation, the latter God's glory in the world; the first for ourselves, the next for God. To every one God has carved out a certain piece of work, which should be performed before working time be done, Eccl. ix. 10. The apostle sets this work before you. "As we have therefore opportunity," says he, "let us do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith." Are you a parent, then bestir yourselves in time for your children, that they may be the Lord's. Are you a master of a family; can you do anything for the church of God? does God put any opportunity of doing him service in thy hand? then despatch your work. Ere long the opportunity may be taken out of thy hand; and it is an unworthy thing for a man to say, I was not aware of this, as many do in a dying hour.

7. Labour to die daily. "I die daily," said Paul. We should as it were habituate ourselves to dying, and be frequently making an essay of dying. This was Job's practice, Job xvii. 13, 14. Ask yourselves what you would do, if you were just to expire; and do the same. A Christian should be frequently making his testament. When you go to a duty, do it as if it were the last you were ever to do on earth. When you awake in the morning, do as if you were to have the grave for your next bed; and when you lie down at night, so compose yourselves as if you were never to awaken more. So it may be.

8. Labour to get your hearts made willing to die, and to long to be partaker of that rest. "I am," says Paul, "in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." For this you must labour, it is not easy to attain it. A fit of passion indeed, may make some desire to be gone, as Jonah; but soon would they shrink back, should the Lord take them at their word. But would you be thus willing, then labour to lay all your cares on the Lord by faith, and to trust him with your worldly concerns, Phil. iv. 6; Jer. xlix. 11. Faith makes the soul rest in God, in midst of perplexing difficulties. You must also keep up due thoughts of the body of sin and death. Keep its ugliness ever in your eye, this will make you long to be rid of it, Rom. vii. 24; and truly, none fitter for rest than that soul that is groaning under the body of death. Labour also to taste the sweetness of the enjoyment of God by faith. The more that a soul gets of this, the more it would have. These heavenly influences carry the soul heavenward. *Finally*, clearness as to your interest in Christ, is a noble preparative for that rest, and to make us willing to depart. Here is

work enough for you; and when you have done it, you will find you have done nothing more than was necessary. We now go on to the

III. General head. To shew how we should labour. The apostle tells us, that a man is not crowned except he strive lawfully. Great labour may be to no purpose.

1. We should labour willingly and cheerfully. "Thou, Lord, meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways." God loves a cheerful giver. When people do nothing in religion, but as reluctant slaves from the force of the whip, it is very unacceptable to God. His people are a willing people, and he cares not for forced work, when the hands work without the heart. If people work not willingly here, where will they do it? It is for your own salvation you are working. God is a good master. Christ's yoke is an easy yoke to a renewed heart. "His commandments are not grievous" to those who obey them from love. Get then the new nature, and then this work will be natural and easy to you, as streams flow easily from a fountain.

2. Diligently. "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." The slothful man is the waster's brother. How busy will a man be to gain something of the world; he will rise early, and sit up late. How busy is the devil to prevent our entrance into that rest, and shall we not be diligent that we may enter. Consider well the eyes of the great Master are upon you, for he is every where present. He sees you in the church, in the closet, in the family, and in all places, Psal. cxxxix. 7—10.

3. Labour with all your might, Eccl. ix. 10. We have a great work to do. Feeble attempts will not accomplish it. It is requisite that we summon together all the powers of our souls. The iron is blunt, we must wield it with more strength. He who asks a thing coldly, courts a denial; and he who works carelessly, and faintly here, portends want of success.

4. Resolutely; like Jacob, who would not let the angel go till he blessed him. We labour for what we cannot want, and therefore must put on a resolution to face, and to run through all difficulties. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." The Israelites when they heard of the Anakims in Canaan, their hearts fainted, they were discouraged, therefore they never saw the land; only Caleb and Joshua, who followed the Lord fully, were allowed to enter.

5. Constantly. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." "We

must be stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." We must not take our work by fits and starts; that is the thing which makes it so uneasy to many; whereas constancy would make it easy to us, and uneasy to be out of this work. Hot and cold fits are signs of a distempered body, so unsteadiness in religion is an evidence that all is not right within. This warfare and work is for term of life. "No man that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back, is fit for the kingdom of God." "For if any man draw back," says God, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Deserters are shamefully and severely punished, when prisoners of war are honourably entertained. We are labouring against the stream, and therefore cannot intermit our work without loss. "Look then to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

6. With fear and trembling, Philip. ii. 12. Keep a holy dread, and reverential fear of God always on your spirits. Fear him as a witness to all you do. He sees what, and how you do. He must be a bold servant indeed, that will neglect his work, or go about it slightly, while his master's eye is upon him. Fear him also, as him from whom you have all your ability for working, lest he should be provoked to withdraw his influences from you. And fear him as your judge, who will one day reward you according to your works. Remember your work will be brought to light, and what you do will be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary.

7. Quickly; without delay, for you know not how soon your sun may go down. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." Your glass is running, and if your time be done before your work, it will be a heavy case.

8. You must refuse no piece of work which God puts into your hands. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy comandments." Many are like servants who, when they are hired, will promise to do all things; but when it comes to the push, the sluggard will not plough because of the cold. You must not carve out your own work, but let Christ carve it out for you, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Lastly, Evangelically; which comprehends the acting from a principle of a new life of grace, called the life of Jesus, 2 Cor. iv. 10. Next a sweet principle of love to God, "For the love of Christ," says Paul, "constraineth us." Again it comprehends a noble end, the glory of God, the honour of the Redeemer, the glory of his grace, and our own salvation. *Finally*, A doing of all in borrowed strength, leaning upon our beloved, and denying ourselves. "For

we, as Christians, must be the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." We proceed,

IV. To shew that we must labour in order to our entering into that rest. I shall evidence this by these considerations following:

1. Consider the several notions under which the Christian's life and the way to heaven is held forth, all of them implying true pains and labour. It is a working, John vi. 27, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth." (Greek,) "work." Here he that works not, shall not eat. Yea, it is a working out of our own salvation; a bringing the work to perfection, otherwise what is done will be lost, 2 John 8. It is compared to the work of the husbandman, which you know is not easy, ploughing, sowing, reaping, Hos. x. 12, especially considering that they are both the labourers, and the ground that is laboured. The Christian is a spiritual soldier, he must fight, 2 Tim. iv. 7; yea, and overcome, Rev. iii. 21. Heaven has a strait gate by which to enter in, and therefore cannot be entered with ease. Men must press into it, Luke xvi. 16; and take it by storm; yea put forth their utmost strength as they that are agonizing. Luke xiii. 24, as wrestling upon life and death. They have a wrestling life of it, Eph. vi. 12, such as makes all the body to shake again. It is a real fight, 1 Cor. ix. 26. It is the running of a race, Heb. xii. 1; which requires patience and perseverance, and great eagerness; for they must so run as to obtain the prize. They must pursue holiness, Heb. xii. 14; as one that earnestly follows a person flying till he catch him; or that pursueth the prey, till he seize it. The apostle says, 2 Cor. v. 9, *we labour;* the word signifies to labour most earnestly, as an ambitious man for honour; and what will not such do, to gain their point?

2. Consider how the way to heaven was typified under the Old Testament. Canaan was a type of heaven, and to what labour were the Israelites put, before they could reach that land, though it was promised to them. This I take to be aimed at in our text. Many a bloody battle they fought, before they got possession. Many a temptation and trial they met with, that laid many of them by. The taking of the castle of Zion, 2 Sam, v. 6. Another eminent type of it, was the ascent into the temple, which was seated upon a hill, even Mount Moriah, 1 Kings x. 5. Many a weary step had some of them ere they got to Jerusalem, Psal. lxxxiv. 6, 7; and when they came there, they had to ascend unto the hill of God, Psal. xxiv. 3, the mount of the Lord's house, a type of heaven. What a wrestling had Jacob, ere he got the blessing, Gen. xxxii; and wherefore this, but to teach us what we have to do, Hos. xii. 4.

3. Consider how the Scripture supposeth this labour. In that the Christian is held forth as a man lying groaning under a heavy burden, Rom. vii. 24; and can such an one be at ease. Again it exhorts us not to weary and faint, Gal. vi. 5; what need of this, if we must not labour? It prescribes remedies against these, and directs us "to consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds." It also calls upon us to increase our stock, which will not be done by idleness. "Occupy till I come." We are also promised strength for working, Isa. xl. 29—31. *Finally*, Heaven is held forth to us as a reward; a reward not for, but according to, our works. "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ."

4. Consider how the Scripture represents the sluggard and his temper to us, as most hateful to God, and as one that is lost by his sloth, Prov. xiii. 4; xx. 4; and xxi. 25. The sluggard is the unprofitable servant, Matth. xxv. 26—30. He is unprofitable to himself, unprofitable to his master, as neglecting his two great works above mentioned. Mark his sentence, he loved darkness to sleep in it. He shall have enough, for his portion shall be in outer darkness. For carnal mirth, he shall have weeping and wailing. He would not plough because of the cold. In hell he shall have it so, as he shall gnash his teeth.

5. Whom God intends for heaven, in them he puts an active principle of grace. It is as natural for grace to bring forth good works, as for a good fruit tree to bring forth good fruit. True grace will not hide, more than a fountain, which if it be stopped at one place, will find vent at another. The Spirit is in believers, as a well of living waters, springing up to everlasting life. Therefore, if you think to be saved without labouring, conclude you shall be saved without grace. If you cannot be saved without grace, no more can you without labouring.

Lastly, To enter heaven without labour is a contradiction; and so impossible. Heaven is a reward, and necessarily pre-supposeth working. Moreover, it is a rest which is a relative term, and has necessarily labour pre-supposed to it. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Heaven cannot be heaven to idlers, for it cannot be a rest to them. The word in the text signifies a ceasing or desisting, therefore they must be labouring before. It is the keeping of a sabbath, or a sabbatism, that remains to the people of God; therefore there must be working through the week of our life. Let us now,

V. Shew why we must labour in this spiritual work, in order to our entering heaven. Negatively; not because by works we must merit heaven, for the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Our working is the way to the kingdom; not the cause of our reigning; Christ's working was that. Men lose their labour, while they offer it to God as their righteousness. The price of heaven, to them that will buy it for themselves, is perfect obedience; according to the King's book of rates. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Now we can never make up this sum, unless we can satisfy for bygone sins, and perfectly obey for the time to come. But we must labour, because,

1. It is the command of our great Lord and Master, whose command we are not to dispute, but to obey. "Why call ye me," says he, "Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if then I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear?" In whatever state man be, he is still a creature, and as a creature owes obedience to his Creator. Though thou hast shot the gulf, as to condemnation, yet you are still under his law. The queen is on the right hand; but she is standing, in token of subjection to him as her Lord, Psal. xlv. 9.

2. The glory of God requires it. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Now his glory is our chief end, 1 Cor. x. 31. Our souls and bodies are his, and therefore ought to be employed in his service. It glorifies God before the world, when a man is at all pains to get there, where God has his throne. The way that we glorify God, is by declaring his perfections before the world. Now God hath stamped his image on the gracious soul; but this is hid, till, by good works in the life, it be displayed. And moreover, the laborious Christian glorifies God, in so far as, by his course of life, men know what a God he is, whom he serves. His carefulness to get on Christ's righteousness, shews him a just God; the Christian fleeing from sin, preacheth God's holiness; and his secret conscientious walk speaks God's omniscience and omnipresence.

3. Because there is an infallible connection betwixt labouring and the rest. Labouring is the only way we can attain it. There is no reaching the treasure of glory without digging for it. "If we live after the flesh, we shall die;" "and without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." If men must have yet a little sleep, outer darkness will be their landing place. Heaven is a place of rest for labourers, not for loiterers. By an eternal decree, this is the fixed

way to heaven. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works; which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." Good works are the seed, after which only we can expect the harvest of glory, Gal. vi. 7, 8; and labouring must needs go before a reward.

4. Because otherwise, we pour contempt on the heavenly rest. It was the sin of the Israelites, Psal. cvi. 24, 25. This rest is God's special mansion house; the palace of the great King, purchased by the blood of the Son; the place for which the Holy Spirit prepares souls. If we labour not for it, this says we think it not worth the pains. How will men labour for the things of the world, yet will not be at pains for heaven. Is not this a real preferring of the world to that glory? Mark the apostle's exhortation, Heb. xii. 14, 15; with the reason of it, ver. 16.

5. Because it is difficult work you have to do, and therefore we should set ourselves to labouring, for it is heart work. Much of religion is inwardly, and the heart must be brought up to every piece of work; and none ever tried that, but must say it is indeed difficult. Again, it is work in which you have all that you did before to undo. Sinner, what hast thou been doing, but labouring to keep thyself out of that rest? Thou hast been platting cords to bind thyself in the pit. Thou hast been weaving thy whole life into one web of sin. Now thou must open all out again, by repentance and fleeing to Christ. Besides it is a work in which you must counterdo; for there are that labour to keep you out of that rest, the devil, the world, and your own corrupt hearts.

Now for APPLICATION.—I exhort you in the words of the text, "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest." Old and young, we would call you here to your work. This is a great purpose, on which we would insist; and to make way for what is to be said to stir you up, I would lay some evidences before you to shew that there is little of this labouring among us.

1. Infrequency in the duties of religion. Many live utter strangers to the duty of prayer, particularly in secret. These that are praying persons, how easily are they satisfied; maybe once a day, maybe twice, though God put other opportunities in their hands. Religion is their byehand work, not their business.

2. The unconcerned way of performing duties. How dead and coldrife are we for the most part, in the duties of religion. In hearing, though our ears be open, our hearts are shut; in prayer, the heart leaves the tongue. We pray as if we cared not whether we be heard or not. Duties are rather managed as a task, than as a privilege. How few labour wrestling for the blessing, and are afterwards concerned to know how they succeed?

3. The want of desire after the heavenly rest. Rest is sweet to the labouring man. Will not the traveller desire the place to which he is going, and the labouring man desire his rest. And so will the Christian; his treasure is in heaven, and his heart will be there also. But alas! the language of the hearts of many is, with that profane cardinal, who said he would give up his part in paradise for certain specified enjoyments on earth. No doubt many would make a bargain with God on lower terms, and let him keep his heaven to himself, so that he would permit them to live on this earth, and shift for themselves.

4. The little appetite after spiritual food. Labouring men can readily take their meat, their work gives them an appetite; and so the man that is labouring to enter will desire the influences of grace, the communications of the Spirit, and fellowship with Christ, that he may be the better fitted for his work. And so his work is to be frequently drawing strength from the fountain of it. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."

5. The little progress that the most make in the way to heaven. Alas! some are gone backward, and are fallen from their first love. Many are like the door on the hinges, still where it was some years ago. How few are there, that are adding a cubit to their spiritual stature? And are these labouring to enter, who are never a whit farther forward than they were? Surely continual dropping wears the rock, and labour overcomes all difficulties. For motives to this labour take the following:

Motive 1. Consider that in other things you do not refuse to labour. You are not such as live idle and at ease. Now God is putting a piece of work in your hands; will you labour for others, but not for him?

1. Consider the work and labour which you have for your livelihood. You are not as many; who sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play. No; in the sweat of your brows you earn your bread. When you have wrought to weariness, all has enough to do to procure you a maintenance, though coarse; and within a little ye shall die, and that body for which thou labourest will moulder into pieces of dust; and of all your labours you shall carry nothing hence, Eccl. v. 15.

But ah! may not many say, they have made me keeper of another's vineyard, but mine own vineyard have I not kept. I have been busy labouring the ground, but mine own heart has been neglected; I have been wearied cutting down the harvest of others, but as yet mine own seed for glory is not sown. I have managed a house, but

neglected mine own soul. I have toiled these many years for my body, but neglected my soul. And what wisdom is in this? For consider, 1. The body is mortal, thy soul is immortal. Wert thou to die like a beast, thou might live like a beast, and only eat, drink, sleep, and work. But thou hast an immortal soul, that will live when thy body dies. It will be vigorous when thy tongue begins to faulter, and thy breath comes to take its last farewell; and will be going to the judgment when thy friends are closing thine eyes, and preparing for thy burial. Will you then labour for the body, and not for the soul?

2. Thy soul craves far more than thy body. While the body is active, a little will serve it for food and raiment; and after death, a small piece of ground, which none will grudge it. But the soul cannot be so easily satisfied. Nothing less than an infinite good can satisfy the soul. He was a fool indeed, who spoke of his soul, as of his swine, saying, "Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Nothing but the eternal enjoyment of God can satisfy the soul, that is the only breast that can stay this hungry child.

3. Thy soul is of far more worth than the body. Is a spiritual substance to be laid in the balance with a piece of dust? The soul is the diamond in the ring, the jewel in the cabinet. To lose the soul by caring for the body, is to lose the foot to save the shoe, Matth. xvi. 26. What a poor bargain had Judas of his thirty pieces! And what a poor bargain have they at death who, like the spider, work out their bowels, and in a moment they and their labours are swept away into darkness!

4. The true way to care for the body, is to labour for the soul. Were there no resurrection of the body, the course of the world were more tolerable; but now they do quite mistake the point; for caring thus for the body at the neglect of the soul, they do but fatten the body for the day of slaughter; laying it down full of sin, to be raised full of wrath, for fuel to God's vengeance. In this sense, that is true, which we have Matth. x. 39; "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." But would we labour for our souls, we should then lay up for our bodies, Phil. iii. 19—21. Make these reflections when you are at your labour.

5. We are all laborious creatures. The greatest idler on earth is in some respect busy. When your hands are doing nothing, yet your hearts are busy. Our life is nothing but a continued succession of actions, as the fire continually burns, and the rivers continually run. Now God does not require of us to do more work, but

only other work. To do more than we do is in some sense impossible, for we are ever doing. The soul of man is like a watch, where the wheels go as fast when it moves falsely, as when it goes true. Seeing then we are ever travelling, why may we not rather hold the King's highway, than be wandering, as the blind, hither and thither.

6. While we labour not to enter into this rest, we are labouring about trifles; like Martha, we are careful and troubled about many things; and like Ephraim, feeding on the wind, and following after the east wind. What are riches, but the name of nothing, Prov. xxiii. 5. Honours, but as a fair bubble that children blow up. In all which, we but load ourselves with thick clay; and when we come to cast up our accounts we may say, "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind." And we answer Solomon's question with shame and blushing, "What profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?" What a fool was he that pretended to lead out an army to fight the enemy, and all he did was to make them gather shells by the sea-side? What a fool was he that busied himself catching flies, while he should have minded the affairs of the empire. Laborious idleness, and solemn trifling, are very unbecoming a Christian.

Motive 2. Your profession and your vows call upon you to labour to enter. You have been professing yourselves believers in Christ, and followers of him. You are therefore called upon "to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold upon eternal life."

You were professing your union and communion with Christ, and therefore labour to enter his rest. The head is gone to heaven, why will not the members labour to follow? Idle members, or such as trifle away their time, are very unsuitable to a head that laboured so hard for their salvation. There is sap in the vine; must the branches hang on it withered, shall they not bring forth fruit? If not, take heed you be not lopped off, and cast over the hedge. Shew your faith by your works, your union with Christ by your spiritual labour. You were professing your near and special relation to him. Are you Christ's children, then mind you are to labour, for he brings up no idlers. The heathens exposed those children that they judged would not be useful for the commonwealth. Christ's spouse must labour to be with her husband, else she gives a shrewd sign of a whorish heart. His servants must all labour, and his soldiers must fight for the kingdom above.

You professed your turning your back on the world and your lusts. What must you do then, but labour to enter into that rest; and as you were called, so to come away with him. Will you look

back again to the flesh-pots of Egypt? Know what a look cost Lot's wife. Have you set your face towards Canaan, and will you not labour to enter there?

You were at a spiritual feast; you have got your meal to fit you for your work; then up and be doing. The passover was eaten by the Israelites with their loins girded, and their staves in their hands, as ready to go forward; so ought it to be with us. He feeds his people, not for slaughter, but for work. There is a banner in Christ's banqueting-house, that the guests may know their work which they have to do.

You were getting a full covenant sealed, influences of grace, strength against corruption, all confirmed to you. It is but a mock if you labour not, and so improve them. Why went you to seek strength, if you intend not to use it? What need have you of influences if you mind not to go in the strength of them?

You were devoting yourselves to the Lord; you have lifted up your hands to the Lord, and you cannot go back. If you do, God will abhor you, the devil will find you more work than before, and you will be a reproach to religion, and you will never sin at so cheap a rate as before.

Motive 3. Your time is short; ere long, all of us shall be in an unalterable state. By the course of nature, some are at the borders of the grave, many in their declining state; to all of us our time is uncertain, for graves of all sizes are in the churchyard. One generation passeth away, another cometh in its stead. There is room enough in the earth, notwithstanding of the vast numbers that came to it before us. Every child that is born, comes to us with a warning away, telling us to provide our lodging elsewhere. Death will neither be boasted nor bribed. Our life is a vapour, our days a shadow, an handbreadth, soon passed over, yea a mere nothing. Is our time short, then it will soon be over, and therefore,

We must labour now or never. The night cometh, in which no man can work. Time for working will soon be gone, how can we be at ease, while so much of our time is past, and so little of our work byhand? Yet are not there many on whom the shadows of the evening are begun to be stretched out, and yet they know not where they will take up their eternal lodging?

Ere long our labour will be over, and we will come to that eternal rest. If the work be hard, yet it is not long. He that is tired with his journey, will recover his spirits, when he sees he is near the end of it; and the shadows of the evening make the labourer work heartily, knowing that it will soon be done. The apostle tells us, our afflictions are but short, our weeping is but for a

moment. For yet a little while, and the laughter of fools, which is but as the crackling of thorns under a pot, will go away in a blaze, and the sorrows and labours of the Lord's people will be at an end. The watchmen will be called in from the posts, the soldiers will lay by their swords and put on their crowns, and the labourers will bid an eternal farewell to their painful labours, and enjoy their reward.

I add, that in some sort, less pains will serve in religion to save you, than men take in sin to damn them. For consider, religion contracts our work, it brings it to one thing, Psal. xxvii. 4; Luke x. 41, 42. Sinners have the devil, the world, and the flesh, to please. The work of religion also is of a piece. Sin not so. All the graces of the Spirit go together in sweet harmony, but our lusts are quite contrary to one another; and as they war against grace, so they war among themselves; so that the sinner is dragged by one lust one way, by another another way. And how uneasy is it to work to different masters. This is what sinners do, and only religion can give ease here.

Motive 4. Your time is uncertain, as well as short. We have no security of life, but are tenants-at-will; when the Lord may call us away we know not, Matth. xxv. 44, 46. A moment's delay here, may be an eternal loss. What an unsure thing is life to depend upon! How many have projected great things to be done in the time to come; but death has come unlooked for, and that day their thoughts have perished. What remains, but that we should quickly set ourselves to work, and with all diligence hold at it.

Motive 5. The devil is busy to keep you out of that rest. He goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Though you be idle, he is not idle. He is an industrious adversary. He will be careful to put other work in your hand, and to suit his temptations to your corrupt inclinations. If he can keep you out of heaven, and accomplish your ruin, he will do it. He is an enemy that wants not skill to contrive means for your ruin. He hath had several thousand years' experience of the art of ruining souls. He wants not malice enough to make him act vigorously; and he hath plenty of cunning to deceive. His power is great, but limited. He may be counteracted, but it will cost labour. By the shield of faith properly wielded, "We shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Learn then of the devil the worth of your souls.

Motive 6. You have weighty calls to this work and labour.

1. You have the call of the word and ordinances. Wherefore has the Lord sent you his gospel, but for this end. Does a master

light a candle for his servants to play themselves? God has lighted his candle among you. The work of ministers is to call you to labour for the salvation of your souls. You are not shut up in the dark, nor muffled up in clouds of error and ignorance. The darkness is over, the light is come; the night is over, the day breaks, and the sun is up; be not then as the beasts, but quit yourselves as men, Psal. civ. 22, 23.

2. You have the call of providence. What may be the conduct of providence towards each of you in particular, you ought to observe. I dare not but say, that the dispensation of providence towards this congregation at this time, calls us to stir up ourselves and to set about our work. The state of affairs also, in this land at this day, has a loud call to us. Many are afraid of a stroke to these nations; and while such great affairs are in agitation, it is unaccountable to be idle and unconcerned.

3. The call of conscience. It is scarcely to be supposed, that men who live under such gospel light as we do, but that sometimes they have their convictions, when even heathens have theirs, Rom. ii. 14, 15. Does not conscience often tell the sluggard, that a little more sleep may be fatal to him. O hear the excitements of your conscience to duty, that you may not have to endure its gnawings.

Lastly, If you labour not, you will never see heaven. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Here consider, that without labouring, you will not be meet for it. In heaven there is eternal work; you should inure yourselves to it then, while on earth. "They rest not there day and night." How uneasy it is for a man to work who has spent most of his days in idleness; and how unmeet are idlers for heaven; and unless you be meet for it, there you cannot come. God makes his people "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Consider also, that falling short of heaven is certainly getting hell. There is no middle place. Now who can dwell with everlasting burnings? O how dreadful will the thoughts of slighted salvation be to the damned?

Objection 1. I am but young, it is time enough. Answer Begin when you will, you will find work enough to occupy all your days. Youth is the best time for that great work; and sure I am, it is far more reasonable to give the best of our days to God than to the devil. But there are graves of all sizes. You know not if ever you shall be old. If you get not something of religion when you are young, seeing you are brought up under a gospel ministry, it will be a thousand to one if you get any thing of it when you are

old. If you should get it then, you will have but little time to serve the Lord, and little strength for that little time.

2. Some say they are old now, and are not able. ANSWER. Consider how you have spent your former days. Some never minded God nor religion while strength lasted, and now strength is gone in a great measure; you have the more need now to be at pains, "lest you shall lie down in the dust, with your bones full of the sins of your youth." As for those that formerly have been at pains, beware that you think not that is enough. To you Jesus says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." None are excepted from labour that will enter; and put the case that your temporal life were lying at the stake, what would you do? But it is the least part of religion that consists in bodily exercise, the most weighty and important part of it consists in soul exercise.

3. Some say they have another thing to mind. They have an ill world to wrestle with, and have much ado to get through it, and obtain a livelihood. ANSWER. It will be sad to wrestle with the world here, and with the wrath of God hereafter. Have you not a soul to wrestle for? Alas! many do in this, as some who, when a house is on fire, to save their clothes, they lose their lives. That is the wrong way to get a through bearing. The safest way is to labour for your souls, and trust to God for your bodies. In this way "bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." "For godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." You that are servants, will work your master's work, and trust that he will pay you what he has promised; why do you not work God's work, and trust his promise as much?

4. Some say they do indeed resolve to be laborious Christians after this. ANSWER. Is this work so easy, that you will needs have it to be harder, ere you put hand to it. Assure yourselves, the longer you delay, you will find the harder work of it. The devil comes alone at first, at length his name is legion; and it is always hard to turn out old possessors. Sin is like waters, the farther from the head the greater they grow, as Ezek. xlvii. 3—5. But again, you are not sure that you shall see another day. We are agreed about the necessity of labouring; the only thing is, God says do it now; you say you will do it afterwards; but the time to come is not yours. "Repent," said the Jewish doctors, "only one day before your death." It is wisely said then, "Repent this day; for it may be thou shalt die to-morrow." Once more, God's grace is not at your disposal, for the outward call may cease, or it may

grow more faint. Conscience and the motions of the Spirit may cease; and if all should continue, you cannot assure yourselves of grace to close with them after this moment.

5. Others say, the business is not so great but it may be soon done; it is but to cry to God for mercy, to believe and repent, and we may do that on a death-bed. ANSWER. How do you know that you shall get a death-bed, that you shall not in a moment drop down into the pit? Are there not some so suddenly snatched away, that if a bare cry for mercy would save them, they cannot have opportunity for it. But if they should get leave to cry, it is not so easily got, Luke xiii. 24. Again, do you think believing and repenting so easy? Then I say, why do you not believe and repent now? Will you not please God in a thing you can so easily do? If you will not do for God what you think you can do so easily, what confidence can you have to look for his favour. Again, I think common sense should teach men at least once to try that on which they mind to venture their eternal state, which if it misgive they eternally perish. If a man were to be let down a steep rock upon a rope, would he not first try if it would bear his weight? Will you then try faith and repentance; and if you have that faith and repentance, that will secure your souls, they will put you on labouring. But it is not so easy to get them as you suppose. True faith and repentance are above nature's reach, Eph. i. 19, 20; Acts iv. 34. When conscience is awakened, though it is easy now for some to presume, yet then it is not, as we see in Judas. The blind mole, when dying, may recover its sight. Do you not observe that a death-bed has oft enough to do with itself? Are not some persons taken away in the rage of a fever, deprived of their senses? Is it time to turn to God, when you cannot turn yourself on your bed; or to secure your soul, when every member of thy body is pained.

6. Some say all this is needless, for they have no power in themselves to do any thing. ANSWER. Wicked men do but mock us in making this objection, for they think not as they speak. To evince this, tell me, did you never resolve to labour? Had you never in all your life one serious thought concerning your souls? Did you never put off the motions of the Spirit with delays? Wherefore do you lean to your own works? Again, no man does all he can, or is able to do. There are many things you are able to do without special saving grace, and yet you will not do them. Does the devil beat drums in your ears while you are hearing the word, that you cannot listen to it, nor apply it? Does he hold fast your doors, and bind you to one another, that you cannot go

alone, and meditate on it? Does he forcibly stretch out your legs, and lay a band on your tongues, that you cannot bow a knee to God, nor cry to him for your souls? Do then what you are able, and look to God for grace, and never rest satisfied till he has put you on the way of labouring. Would a master take this for an excuse from his servant, that he has no power to work till God act and move him? Why this is a most certain truth. Yet he must set himself to it, and look to God for his concurrence. Upon the whole then, let me charge your consciences with that word, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

7. Some say there are but few at such pains about religion, and these are a crowd of mean people. ANSWER. These might be just prejudices against religion, if Christ had not foretold that it would be so, Matth. vii. 13, 14; Matth. xi. 25; 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. But I had better go to heaven with the poorest on earth, than to hell with nobles, rich men, and the greatest wits of the age. If the Scripture be true, it is but few that will be saved. This work honours any man, but no man can honour it.

Now to make this labour easy to you, I would recommend,

1. To keep the encouragements to the work in your eye; particularly such as these, the example of these that have gone before you, and have got safe to the journey's end. These have made it appear the work is possible, and the reward certain. You are not the first that have taken heaven by storm. There is a cloud of witnesses before you. Again, that God accepts of sincere obedience, though the work be not perfect; if the workman be so, that is sincere, the Lord accepts the work. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." Now that heart is sincere, where there is not an allowance of any known sin. Another encouragement is, the help promised and ready for those that sincerely labour. "It is God that worketh in them, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." If you do the things that please him, you are not alone, he is with you. There is also the great reward that is promised; and we are to have "respect unto the recompence of reward." It is no wonder people labour for a rewarding God, whose hands are as full of rewards as his mouth of commands.

2. Live by faith. Faith has a mighty influence on our labouring. Faith entitles us to that rest, and faith brings supplies for that labour from the Mediator. It provides for all the rest of the graces of the Spirit. A faith of the principles of religion, and a faith relying on the Mediator, are most useful.

3. Labour to get and keep up love to Christ. Love is the load-

stone of obedience. It makes every thing easy for the attaining of what is beloved, as in Jacob's love to Rachel.

4. Look upon that labouring as your interest, as well as your duty. Duty, considered as a mere task, is a weary business. O wonder that there is a possibility of entering that rest, and that you may in such a way attain to it.

Lastly, Be constant in that labour. The great uneasiness flows from the interruptions in that work. To stand still is to backslide, and produces a new work to make up our lost ground, and constancy creates easiness; what is at first hard, by continued custom becomes easy.

Doctrine II. That heaven is a rest into which, those that now labour for it shall be received. I have several times had occasion to discourse of heaven. I will at present only point at a few things.

I. In what respect heaven is a rest?

1. It is a rest from sin. Sin is a toil to a gracious soul. Satan often gets God's children set to his work now; but were they once there, they shall sin no more, for the spirits of just men are made perfect. They shall then be freed from all commission of sin, from the inbeing of it, inclination to it, yea, or possibility of it.

2. From all misery, outward or inward; no pain nor sickness; the poor shall be as easy there as the rich; no desertion, nor hidings of God's face. The wrath to come shall not come near their dwelling.

3. From the works of their wilderness state. They shall not be put to gather the manna in societies for prayer, or in public ordinances; but they shall be fed to the full with the product of the land falling into their mouths without toil; no prayers, mourning self-examination, nor mortification there. Faith gives place to sight, and hope to fruition.

4. It is a rest, in that it is the fulfilment of all the desires of the soul. There they shall have the perfect enjoyment of God, and uninterrupted communion with him. This is the point to which the soul inclines; as the needle in the compass, to the north. Till it comes there, it is restless; but when there, it rests; for he is the ultimate end, and it can go no farther. The soul can understand, will, desire, no more. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee."

II. What sort of a rest is heaven?

1. It is an active, or working rest. Their works follow them in this sense. It is not a place where the soul may sleep out an eternity; but they rest not day nor night, yet their work is a rest. They will wonder evermore, and yet with delight they will rejoice

evermore without any surfeit, and praise without being weary of the exercise.

2. A perfect rest; a rest for soul and body both. The Israelites when they got free of Pharaoh's taskmasters, yet in the wilderness had sore toil, but then came to Canaan; so the people of God, they get some rest by conversion, but their great rest is reserved for glory. When they came to the typical rest, there were thorns left for their eyes, and pricks for their sides, but none in heaven.

3. Eternal; it shall never be disturbed. "They shall be ever with the Lord." Their glory is eternal, their crown fades not away. When they shall have been millions of years in their beds of glory, there shall be none to create them the least disturbance, but for ever they shall rest in the bosom of God.

O then take heed ye fall not short of this rest, Heb. iv. 1.

1. Consider that the most of us, at least, have none of the pleasantest lives in the world. You work, you toil, and win your bread with the sweat of your brows. The world is a stepdame to many of us; now to fall short of this rest after this, is to have a continual winter, two hells, neither rest here nor hereafter.

2. All of us have some hopes of this rest. Hope deferred makes the heart sick; but the eternal frustration of it will be a death, an arrow sinking through the heart. To fall out of a hoped-for rest, will sink the soul to the bottomless gulf of despair.

3. We have this rest in our offer. The King of glory declares his willingness to match with us, and to infeft us in the holy land. To be excluded out of an offered rest, will make the soul for ever restless, and gnaw it as a worm.

4. There is not the least rest in hell, not a drop of water. They must needs be for ever sinking that are sent to a bottomless pit. The smoke of their torment ascends, the worm never dies there, the fire is never quenched. Let us then labour to enter into that rest.

Lest any man fall, after the same example of unbelief.

Doctrine. That unbelief is the great thing that makes hearers of the gospel fall short of heaven. It is by this they stumble, fall, and destroy themselves; even as by it the Israelites fell short of Canaan. To confirm this point, consider unbelief two ways:

I. As it rejects the word of God. "They despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word." God has made a revelation of his will unto sinners, in his word, faith believes his word, unbelief rejects it, and so in effect says God is a liar. What can be expected then, but that the God of truth avenge himself on this affront, by shutting the unbeliever out of heaven.

1. Unbelief rejects the doctrines of the word. We see how far it has proceeded with some this day, that it has steeled their foreheads with as much impiety and impudence as to reject the word of God openly; and to disbelieve all these truths that reason teacheth not. The same root of unbelief is in us all by nature, and reigns there, where grace has not captivated the heart to the obedience of the truth. That this unbelief is even there, where it is not professed, is clear, if we consider how few there are, that have had the inward illumination of the Spirit of Christ to discover to them these truths in their heavenly lustre, John vi. 45. Most men have received the principles of religion, merely by the benefit of their education; and so their belief rests upon human testimony, which is no foundation for divine faith, and therefore they are still unbelievers, Matth. xi. 25; and xvi. 17. Again, how many make shipwreck of their faith, even of fundamental principles, in a time of temptation, especially in a time of suffering, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. That house must be built on the sand, and that faith must be ill founded, that cannot abide a storm. Ofttimes it has been seen, that they that could dispute for the truth, could not suffer for it; while others that could not dispute, could suffer. What is the reason, but "that God hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes." Another proof of prevailing unbelief is, the inconsistency of most men's lives with their professed principles. Many a man that pretends a sound head has an unsound heart. You may as easily bring east and west together, as many men's practice and their principles; therefore God may say to them, as Delilah to Samson, "How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me." Every person believes fire will burn them, and therefore none cast themselves into it.

2. Unbelief rejects the promises of the word. God has made great promises, but unbelief looks upon them only as fair words. They that receive these promises, are by them made partakers of a divine nature; but surely men possessed of such a nature are very rare, for as the apostle says, "all men have not faith," that is, few men. The Israelites had a promise of entering Canaan, but did they believe it? No; they said, "God had brought them to the wilderness to kill them." The promises are as silver cords sent down from from heaven, to draw sinners to the promised land; but unbelievers cast these cords away from them.

3. Unbelief rejects the threatenings of the word. Men are of stubborn natures; God hath therefore hedged about his law with threatenings of wrath. As men travelling in deserts carry fire with them, to drive away wild beasts from attacking them, so God

threatens men, to keep them from sin; but sinners generally are more beastly than beasts, and will touch the smoking fiery mountain, though they should be thrust through with a dart; and will make promises of safety to themselves, in opposition to God's threatenings, Deut. xxix. 19, 20. If we consider narrowly, we will find unbelief of the truths of God at the bottom of almost all these sins that ruin souls, as the mother that brings them forth, Heb. iii. 12. I will instance this in a few, what more bloody sin than unconcernedness about the state of our souls. Few are concerned to inquire into that, whether there be a change made on them, that is saving or not. They live as they were born, and are like to die as they live. Now, what is the cause of this but unbelief, which makes them say, "we are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Do these persons believe the sinfulness and misery of a natural state? Do they believe they cannot please God, that they are full of sin, and every thing they do is sin? that they are under the wrath and curse of God, and that there is no salvation without regeneration, and no regeneration but that which makes a new creature?

Again, presuming on the mercy of God, they live in their sins out of Christ, and yet they hope for mercy. Do these believe that God is such an one as he has revealed himself to be? Do they believe him to be just and holy, and that he will by no means clear the guilty. They overturn the very foundation of the gospel; for if mercy could have been had for mercy's sake, what needed Christ die.

The text intimates to us, that it is unbelief that cuts the sinews of the labour here enjoined. What idler would not dig, if he thought to find a gold mine that should be his own? How do men sweat and work, in order to get a livelihood, and these same persons will not be at pains for heaven. Surely if they believed the one as well as the other, they would not refuse. By the continuance of an unholy life, men shew that they do not believe that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Do they think hell to be a real place of torment, or only a bugbear?

II. Consider unbelief as rejecting Christ. When men had by their sin excluded themselves from heaven, God sent Christ into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Now unbelief rejects him, and casts him off, who is the only Saviour, Acts iv. 12.

Unbelief questions, yea and denies the soul's need of Christ. It puffs up men with conceit of themselves, so that it is a difficulty to

get them to submit to be carried to heaven. "Going about to establish a righteousness of their own, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Strange indeed, that the patient will refuse to submit to a cure, or a naked man to receive clothes.

Sometimes unbelief denies the infinite merit of Christ, and with Cain says, as the margin has it, Gen. iv. 13, "My sin is greater than can be forgiven." O! but it goes ill down with an unrenewed heart, to expect life out of death, and satisfaction to justice by another. They that have believed according to the exceeding greatness of God's power, have found this very difficult.

Sometimes it denies Christ's willingness to save and help the sinner. Hence we find the leper believing his power, but doubting his will: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Men think it easy to believe Christ's willingness to save them, till the conscience be enlightened, and then this monster sets up its head. Now rejecting Christ, it must needs make men fall short of heaven. For by this mean,

1. It keeps the soul in a state of condemnation. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." It keeps the soul under the curse of the first covenant, lays them open to the justice of God, in so far as it makes the soul turn its back upon the city of refuge. The soul is kept naked, having no righteousness in which it can stand before the Lord.

2. It keeps the soul in a state of impotency to do any thing to purpose for its salvation. It shackles the man so as he cannot labour, nay, nor move heavenwards. "Without me," says Jesus, "ye can do nothing." No influences of grace, to help to resist temptations, can the unbeliever have; for unbelief blocks up the way of communication between heaven and earth, Jer. xvii. 5, 6; Matth. xiii. 58. The unbeliever may pray, but God regards not his prayers, "for without faith it is impossible to please him."

3. In a state of separation from God; for there is no access to God, but by Jesus Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by him." Faith lays hold on him in whom the Father is well pleased. But as all they that were out of the ark perished in the waters; so all they that are out of Christ shall perish in everlasting misery.

4. Under the guilt of all its other sins. If a man believe, he will be saved, whatever his sins have been; for faith transfers the guilt upon Christ, which the river of his blood washeth away: but if not, he is damned: for unbelief rivets all other guilt.

Use. Take heed, then, there be not in you an evil heart of unbelief. Here is the enemy that kills its ten thousands; that makes foolish virgins fall down to hell from the threshold of heaven. It signifies little what lusts be borne down, if this set up its head and prevail; if there be any hazard, it is from this quarter; yet how many are there that will mourn and confess other sins, but this that wounds Christ's heart most, touches their hearts least. Seek it out then, lest if it be with you undiscerned, it lock you out of heaven at last.

The example of others that have fallen by unbelief, should quicken us to all diligence about our salvation. By unbelief the Israelites fell in the wilderness, and never saw the promised land. By unbelief, many that have a flourishing profession have turned apostates from God; see these, John vi. 60, 66. The Jews fell out of the visible church by this, Rom. xi.; and by this, hypocrites in all ages have fallen short of heaven. For this end they are recorded, that we may escape the rocks on which others have split. Our hearts are all alike by nature; "as in water, face answereth to face; so the heart of man to man." We may stumble on the stumbling stone on which others have broken to pieces, if we do not take heed.

See then what use we are to make of the sin and ruin of others.

They are not matters of sport or talk, to spend the time; but fearful examples placed before us, to bid us always beware. Sure, as a fall from a high place is the most dangerous; so for us to fall over others that have fallen, and whose fall should make us take heed to our feet, will make us fall very deep into the bottomless pit. The first unbelievers may say, though they heard, yet they saw not the danger; but after such direful examples, we cannot but say, as we have heard, so have we seen. Amen.

Presbyterial Exercise, May, 27, 1708.

MINISTERS IN THE CHURCH APPOINTED BY CHRIST.

SERMON XXX.

EPHESIANS iv. 11, 12.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

THE apostle having pressed unity amongst church members, even from the consideration of the diversity of gifts among them, seeing they all come from one and the same head; namely, from Christ their common Lord and store-house; and having confirmed this from Psal. lxviii. 18, he doth in the text instance these divers gifts, all bestowed by that one blessed head for the very same ends. "And he gave," &c., this is the connection.

But lest we stumble in the threshold, there is one difficulty to be removed, before we enter on a particular explanation of the words. This is, in the text there is nothing of gifts, but only of offices and office-bearers instituted by Christ in his church. He speaks not of gifts necessary for the apostleship, but of apostles; he says not of the gift of prophecy, but prophets. To this it is answered, that saying the latter, he supposeth the former; the diversity of offices including the diversity of the respective gifts, seeing Christ never calls any to an office, but he always endues them with gifts in some measure suitable. He thrust out no labourers to his vineyard, without instruments for labour; nor does he send out any naked and unarmed, to pull down the kingdom of Satan. Thus the anointing in use of old, did signify both the call and furniture for the office.

In these words we have two things:—

1. A remarkable instance of our exalted Lord's liberty to his church, in bestowing divers gifts upon her.

2. The end for which he hath given these.

As to the first of these, for the right understanding of it, four things are to be considered: 1. The gifts. 2. The giver. 3. The act of donation. 4. The time to which it relates.

As to the gifts, they are various, and this variety is held forth two ways:

1. By the distributive particle *some*, often repeated; which seems to hold forth two things: 1. A distinction betwixt the church and

her officers, and teachers, against the confusion introduced by Socinians, Anabaptists, and others, who impugn the necessity of a call to the work of the ministry, and transgress the sacred boundaries set by the Lord of the vineyard; who gave some, not all, to be apostles, pastors, and teachers. All may indeed prophecy, as saith the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 31, that is, all who have the gift of prophecy; but as the apostle says, 1 Cor. xii. 29, "Are all apostles, are all prophets." 2. A distinction among the offices which Christ has instituted; he made not all church officers apostles; but some apostles. He hath given the several office-bearers in his house their distinct provinces; some to be employed one way, some another, though all for the good of the church. Even as in the building of a house, divers artificers must be employed, every one in their proper work; but all for one and the same end, to make a convenient habitation. Howbeit, these office-bearers are not co-ordinate but subordinate; and the superior office includes the inferior, so as the apostle could do what the prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher might do; but not contrariwise. We acknowledge a beautiful subordination of officers and courts, in church government; but amongst officers of the same kind, there is by divine institution a parity.

2. This variety is held forth by a distinct enumeration of several orders of the ministry in the church. We must particularly inquire what these are:

I. As for apostles. The word in general signifies any messenger sent in affairs, whether of the church or commonwealth, John xiii. 16. Thus Epaphroditus, is in Philip. ii. 25, called the apostle of the Philippians, ὑμων δε αποστολον, or messenger; as being sent by them to Paul, to carry their benevolence to him; not as having the name and office of an apostle derived to him, as some fondly imagine; which absurd conceit the antitheses in the text at first view baffles. "Yet I supposed," says Paul, "it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministereth to my wants." Now this resolved, according to that notion, will scarcely make good sense. But the word in Scripture is usually taken in a more restrained sense; and denotes those extraordinary officers whom Christ set in his church, as master builders, who are commonly reckoned twelve; Matthias being added to the eleven, in room of Judas, and afterwards Paul was added. These were a kind of office-bearers in the church whose commission was universal and unconfined; whose great work was to plant and found churches through the world, Matth. xxviii. 19; being endued with an infallibility in teaching, according to John xvi. 13. They had power to work miracles, and

to confer the visible gifts of the Holy Spirit, by imposition of their hands, and were eye witnesses of Christ. Hence Paul proving his apostleship, urgeth this, 1 Cor. ix. 1; and pleads it for himself with the rest, 1 Cor. xv. 7, 8. That they were immediately called, is generally the opinion of orthodox divines, from which we see no reason to depart, seeing the evangelists witness this of all of them but Matthias and Paul. As for Paul's immediate call, it is no less clear from Acts xxvi. 16; Gal. i. 1.

A late prelatical writer asserts that Matthias was not immediately called, but by the apostles. But it is plain from the history of Matthias' call, recorded Acts i, that he was by God's immediate choice and declaration by a lot, set apart for his office; and though the apostles presented the two to the Lord, yet he made the choice, and gave the call by that lot, after prayer made to him for that effect. A late writer of our own, to whose labours our church oweth very much, doth in this point go something out of the ordinary road, asserting it to be most evident that God called Matthias mediately, partly by the suffrages of the people, partly by their lots; yet withal, he grants that Matthias' call was extraordinary in that God directed the lots by an extraordinary providence, as in the case of Achan. For ought I know, the discovery of Achan has hitherto been looked upon as immediately from God, and the text seems to sound it so, Josh. vii. 14. And if Paul's call was immediate, being by a voice from heaven, so was Matthias' call; God discovering his mind in this case by the lot, as much as by a voice in the other. "Wherefore," the apostles in their prayer before the lots say, Acts i. 24, "Shew whether of these two thou hast chosen." The call and choice then was the Lord's, by himself, not by the people; and the lot was an infallible discovery of his mind, as it was in that case used. For although God doth not guide elections performed by lots so as they shall always fall right, when the choice is referred to a lot, without a call from the Lord to make use of the lot, as in the case of choosing magistrates by lot, which became unnecessary is therefore unlawful; yet the apostles having been called to the use of lots in this case, and having a promise of the discovery of God's mind in this case thereby, this being necessarily pre-supposed to their prayer in faith, it plainly follows this lot could not but fall right, and consequently that the call thereby was God's immediate call, as much as if it had been by a voice from heaven.

After all, that the people there, being only one hundred and twenty, should have a power to call a man to be an immediate officer of the universal church, by an approved deed, as the apostles were, seems to be a principle that can hardly be defended; unless,

with a certain set of men, it be maintained that the number of the brethren then was no more than an hundred and twenty, which with little difficulty might be disproved.

II. There are prophets. The word signifies one that foretells things to come. The New Testament prophets spoken of in the text, were those who were endued with singular wisdom and knowledge of divine things, not by human industry, but by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They did by immediate inspiration interpret the Scriptures, open up the Old Testament prophecies, confirming and proving the doctrines of the gospel by these. Hence revelation is made the matter of prophecy, 1 Cor. xiv. 6. God did also by his Spirit reveal to them things to come, which they foretold for the confirming the faith of the people of God, and rendering the wicked inexcusable, Acts xi. 27, 28; and xxi. 10. The nature of their office shews their call to have been immediate. The church of the Jews had prophets raised up to them for a long time, but prophecy ceased with them when Malachi died; and their church having been thereby planted, nourished, and maintained, its failing was a token their church was about to expire. They themselves acknowledge that the gift of prophecy was not bestowed under the second temple, on any after the days of Malachi, so they reckon it among the five things wanting in the second house; but they expected the restoration of it under the Messiah, and that warrantably, as Joel ii. 28, 29. Wherefore the setting up of prophets under the New Testament is a conclusive argument against them, that the Messias is come. Unless they admit of the New Testament prophets, prophecy has left them about double the time that their church, as constituted by Moses, had it; which nothing but judicial blindness can make Haggai's little while, chap. ii. 6, 7.

III. There are evangelists. Not those who wrote the gospel, for two of these were apostles, namely, Matthew and John; but a kind of preachers of the gospel, who were companions of the apostles in their travels, assisting them in the work of the gospel; being sent out by them to settle and water such churches as the apostles had planted, 1 Cor. iii. 6; 1 Tim. i. 3. They were not fixed pastors of any particular church, but remained in these places whither the apostles sent them, till they were by them recalled, 2 Tim. iv. 9. Such were Tychicus, Sylvanus, and others, and particularly Timothy and Titus, whom prelatists will needs have to be bishops, the one at Ephesus, the other at Crete, though Timothy is expressly called an evangelist, 2 Tim. iv. 5. Besides the occasional transient employment of Timothy at Ephesus, and of Titus in Crete, is sufficiently intimated by the apostle, while he tells us, that he besought

Timothy to abide at Ephesus, and that he left Titus, both of them upon a special business, 1 Tim. i. 3; Tit. i. 5; and they are both recalled in the very epistles sent to them. That they are called bishops in the postscripts of the epistles sent to them is no argument; these postscripts being neither canonical nor true. They were not subjoined to the epistles, till some hundreds of years after they were written. In the postscript of the first epistle to Timothy, Phrygia is called Pacatian, which was not the name of it, till it was conquered by Pacatius, a Roman general, three hundred years after Christ. The postscript of that to Titus says it was written to Nicopolis, which agrees not with Titus, iii. 2.

IV. There are pastors, feeders of the flock of God, and the word denotes both preaching and ruling. Their office is to pray with, and for the flock; to read the Scriptures publicly; to catechise, bless the people, and rule them; all which, and more belonging to their office, is asserted by the Westminster Assembly, in the propositions concerning church government. These are our ministers of congregations.

Lastly, There are teachers or doctors, whose work it is to teach the doctrines of religion, and confute the contrary errors. Though the particle *some* is not here added betwixt the pastors and teachers, yet they are distinct church officers. The pastor being gifted with a word of wisdom, by which, besides his ability in some measure to open the Scripture, he is fitted wisely and powerfully to apply the word for working on people's affections, and for advancing practical godliness. The teacher being gifted with a word of knowledge for opening up the Scripture, establishing truth, and confuting error. This difference the apostle holdeth forth, 1 Cor. xii. 8; Rom. xii. 7, 8, where the difference of their functions is clearly intimated by the different concerns which they are to wait upon.

The apostle doth not here enumerate all the office-bearers in the church. We will find others reckoned up by him elsewhere, and therefore silence here as to ruling elders and deacons is no argument against their offices; the scope of the apostle here being only to enumerate preaching officers, whose various gifts are most conspicuous in the edifying of the church; who are appointed for the work of the ministry, to bring us to unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, verses 12—14.

But no satisfactory reason can be given for omitting pope or prelate here, had they been any of Christ's creatures in his church. When they shall shew the signs of their apostleship, then, and not till then, may we allow them to be the successors of the apostles, in another sense than ordinary ministers.

The apostles, prophets, and evangelists, were extraordinary officers, and their offices ceased with themselves, having been appointed for that particular state of the church. Now the house is built up and finished; and pastors and teachers, and other ordinary officers, are sufficient to hold it up, though they were not so for erecting it.

II. The giver is Christ. The apostle elsewhere ascribes the giving of gifts to the Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 11; and the giving of these offices he ascribes to the Father; but this being an external work of God, is common to all the three persons. The Father is the fountain of all gifts, the Son the distributor of them by the Holy Spirit.

III. The act of donation, *he gave*. It denotes the excellency and usefulness of these offices, which Christ has given to supply the want of his bodily presence. And withal, his sending out these officers, as well ordinary as extraordinary, for both are said to be given by him.

IV. The time to which this relates; "when Christ had ascended up on high." OBJECTION. Christ gave the apostles their commission before he ascended. ANSWER. Till Christ ascended, they had not the fulness of apostolical gifts necessary for the discharge of their office in its full extent. Therefore Jesus, being assembled together with them after his resurrection, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. Consequently, after Christ's ascension, they were solemnly inaugurated and installed in their office, by the visible outpouring of the Spirit upon them. "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." They had their commission before this; but the actual sending of them through the world was not till this time. We are now,

II. To attend to the end or design of this gift, which is threefold:

1. In respect of the saints, these who are in Christ already, the ministry is to perfect them, *προς τον καταρτισμον*. The word signifies the restoring and setting dislocated members again in their proper place; it is borrowed from surgeons, with whom *καταρτισμος* is *μεταγωγη των οστεων εκ του προς φυειν τοπον, εις τον κατα φυσιν*. The reducing of bones from a preternatural, to their natural place and situation. It signifies also, the perfecting and establishing them in the restored state. So the Corinthians, who by their factions and divisions were rent asunder, and as a disjointed body, are exhorted to be *καταρτισμενοι*, perfectly joined together, as a joint well knit, 1 Cor. i. 10. The saints being, by reason of remaining corruption, so ready to turn aside both from Christ the head, and from their brethren fellow-members. God gave ministers to be spiritual surgeons to set

them right again, and to fix them in nearer union to Christ by faith, and to their brethren in love.

2. In regard of themselves, for the work of the ministry. It is for work that they are appointed. This work for the kind of it is διακονια, a ministry or service. The first excluding idleness, the second excluding a lordly dominion. The word comes from κονις *dust*, and denotes a painful and laborious service, in which men are serviceable, as those that make haste in travel, raising the dust about them by their speed. So that they are neither to be loiterers, nor lords over God's heritage; but to serve them in the concerns of their souls, by the dispensing of the word publicly and privately, by dispensing the sacraments, and the censures of the church.

3. In respect of the body of Christ; it is to edify it, namely, the mystical body of Christ. There is a double metaphor here; one taken from the natural body to which the church is compared, in respect of its union with Christ the head by faith, and that union that is among the saints by love; and the vital influences received from Christ by the church. The other metaphor is taken from masons, whose work it is to build a house. Thus they are to build the body of Christ; and so they do, when they are instruments in Christ's hand to lay new stones in the building; that is, to convert the elect, and to fix and raise up others that are already laid; being instruments of the growth of converts in knowledge, faith, and holiness.

The Holy Ghost casts in that of the work of the ministry betwixt the other two ends. The two great ends not being to be obtained by naked gifts, or the honour of the office, but by a painful and laborious discharge of the trust committed to them.

The sum of all is, Christ Jesus having ascended up on high, gave various gifts to the church, in that he gave various officers to it suitably qualified; he gave some, not all, to be extraordinary, namely, apostles, prophets, and evangelists; some to be ordinary officers, pastors, and teachers; and whatever differences be amongst them, they were all given for one common end, to labour in dispensing gospel ordinances, for restoring and perfecting saints, who are so often out of frame, and for gathering in the elect, and increase of grace in those that are converted.

Presbyterial Exercise Addition, June 24, 1708.

MINISTERS TO CONTINUE TILL THE CHURCH BE PERFECT.

SERMON XXI.

EPHESIANS iv. 13,

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

DOCTRINE I. That the office and work of the ministry is to continue till all the elect of God be fully perfected, and the church arrive at its full growth. This is the principal doctrine of the text. We shall first confirm this doctrine, and then give the reasons of it.

I. To confirm the truth of this, consider,

1. That Christ's presence is promised to the ministry always, even to the end of the world, Matth. xxviii. 20; now this supposeth the existence of the ministry till then. Ministers are the stars which Christ holdeth in his right hand, that will always shine more or less while the stars are in the firmament; and wicked men may as well attempt the divesting of the heavens of these glorious lights, as the church of Christ of a ministry, for they shall never be able to effect the one any more than the other. Even when the church is into the wilderness, some are commanded to feed her there.

2. The sacraments are to continue till then, and consequently a ministry by which they may be dispensed. As to baptism, it is plain from that, Matth. xxviii. 20. Though the blasphemous Socinians account it only a temporary right, used by the apostles towards those, whether Jews or Gentiles, of whom the gospel church was first made up. But there is a command universal in respect of persons to be baptized; in respect of places, and in respect of times, to the end of the world. As circumcision lasted in the church till Christ's first coming, so must baptism till he come again. And as for the sacrament of the supper, it must continue till the Lord come again. For by it we do shew the Lord's death till he come.

3. The Scripture holds forth public ordinances, in which the Lord keeps communion with his people, never to be laid aside till they come to glory. It is one of the singularities of the upper house, that there is no temple there, Rev. xxi. 22. Here they look through the lattices of ordinances, till they come to see face to face in heaven. It is when the day of glory breaks, that these shadows

will flee away; but till that time, Christ has promised to be in the mountain of myrrh—the public ordinances; so called in allusion to the temple, which was on a mountain.

II. Reasons of the doctrine. It must continue.

1. Because the ministry is a mean of the salvation of the elect. "It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." They are these by whom the Lord gathers his elect; the means must continue till the end be obtained, Rom. x. 14, 15. While there is a lost sinner to seek, the Lord will not blow out the candle; and while the night remains, and till the sun arise, these less lights are necessary to be continued in the church.

2. The ministry is appointed of Christ, in some measure to supply the want of his bodily presence in the world. He spoke in the prophets before he came, as the word is, Heb. i. 1; yea to the old world, by his Spirit in Noah a preacher of righteousness, he preached. Now when he is ascended up on high, he hath given a ministry; and now God doth beseech sinners by them; and in Christ's stead, we pray sinners to be reconciled to God. They must then continue till the Lord come again.

3. Because their work which they have to do, will continue till then. They are ambassadors for Christ, and while he has a peace to negociate with sinners, he will still employ his ambassadors. While Christ keeps house in the lower world, stewards must be maintained to give his servants meat in due season. While weeds grow in the vineyard, the labourers must be continued; and till the house be fully built, and every stone laid in the building, it is not time to dismiss the builders.

4. What society can be preserved without government and governors. Every society hath its governors, and so the church must have hers also. While corruption remains in church members, there will be out-breakings among them. That company that is terrible as an army with banners, how mean would it be if there were not a set of men appointed by the Lord to order and govern them; they would soon turn into a mass of confusion. In the best constituted church how often is the beauty of it marred; how often does the enemy break in, though the watchmen keep their posts, and stand to give warning to the city; how much more, if there were no watchmen at all. These then must be continued, till they all be within the gates of that city, where the gates are never shut, because no enemy can make an attempt to break in, and these that are within have no inclination to go out.

Use 1. Of information. It lets us see that the church shall never fail altogether. The continuance of the ministry argues the con-

tinuance of the church. When the Lord has done his work, he will doubtless call in his servants, and will not have watchmen where there is no city to watch. The church and her ministry also, may be driven into the wilderness, and they may both be reduced to a very small number, but neither of them shall altogether fail. There may be seven thousand in Israel, when Elias thinks he is left alone; and the witnesses of the truth may be seen so far gone as if they were dead, and yet there are still some in the darkest time, who afterwards appear as if they had risen from the dead.

Again, this shews that Christ hath a special care of, and providence watching over the ministry. Ministers are the great butt of the world's malice, the thorns in their eyes of which they would fain be freed; and readily, when a storm ariseth, it blows most violently on their faces. Papists cry for miracles; if they were not blinded, they might see it in the continual preservation of these earthen vessels, for all the opposition they meet with in the world. But Christ holds the stars in his right hand.

We see also the dignity of the office. The greatest officers in earthly kingdoms, yea kings themselves, hold not their offices by such a tenor. Their work is to carry on God's work in the church till the church be perfected, a noble work, and a long term indeed for the continuance of their office; which is never to cease till God be all in all, and all the elect be in heaven.

Wo then to those that are above teaching, and despise the ministry as that which they might well want. Has Christ set a ministry in the church as an useless burden upon the people. It speaks a profane spirit, and a growth indeed, but not towards that in the text; a growth in wickedness and self-conceit. Let us therefore prize the preaching of the word.

Doctrine II. The diversity of gifts bestowed on ministers hath a tendency to, and is designed for advancing of unity among God's elect people, for unity is the centre of all these divers gifts. These are as the strings of a viol, some sounding higher, others lower; yet altogether making a pleasing harmony. "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." There are many things necessary to make a compact building, such as the church is. Some must procure the stones, some lay them; some smooth and join the wood, and altogether make a compact uniform house. Round about the throne are the four beasts; some eminent for lion-like boldness; some for the patience and laboriousness of the ox; some for prudence, and some for quick-sightedness in the

mysteries of godliness. The church can want none of them. "The eye cannot say to the foot I have no need of thee." Some brought blue, purple, scarlet, goat's hair, to the tabernacle. Some of these things were more necessary than others, but none of them could be wanted. All our Lord's gifts to his servants, tend to unite his servants with God, and among themselves, by faith and love.

Use. 1. For information. This lets us see what a desirable thing unity in the Lord is. It is that which is the great end of all these divers gifts that Christ has bestowed. It is comely in the eyes of the Lord, and so should it be in ours. By Adam's fall his whole posterity were broken and shattered, rent from God and from one another. To cure this, God has appointed Christ a new head, under whom they might all meet again in unity; and Christ has appointed ministers adorned with a diversity of gifts, in order to accomplish this.

2. It may also let us see what is that government of the church that looks most like divine institution; whether prelacy that gives the keys unto one, or presbytery that gives them to the unity of ruling church officers. Which of them is most adapted to the end of the ministry; whether one gift, or diversity of gifts. The text determines the question, and consequently determines that several presbyteries diversely gifted, are the subjects of church power, and not a single prelate. Prelacy looks nothing like Christ's economy, and his way of managing his house; therefore prelacy brought in for the remedy of schism, was a step very far out of Christ's way. And this church was for many years preserved from heresy and schism also, by means of presbyterian government; and though of late our schisms have increased, it remains still, that it is the government most adapted to unity, according to the Scriptures.

Use 2. Of reproof. It reproves those people who make the divers gifts of ministers occasions of schism and faction. "One saying I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos." It is a great weakness that people cannot value one gift, but they must undervalue another. Many cannot build up one in their esteem, but they must needs have the ruins of others for a foundation for it. How contradictory are their desires, to what Christ would have in the church. Christ would have diverse gifts, and they would have but one, and that all might be just of a piece with what they fancy. These that say they can get no good of such and such a gift, had need to take heed, that when they get good, it be not rather a tickling of their fancy, than solid edification.

But much more are these ministers to be reproved, who improve their gifts to the rending of the church, and breeding in people a

contempt of others. "Some, indeed, preach Christ, even of envy and strife: and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds." This is a dreadful perverting of the end of these gifts, and says that such are devoted more to their own honour than to the good of souls.

Doctrine III. Whatever differences are now among the godly, yet a perfect unity is abiding them, in which they shall all have the same apprehensions and views of spiritual things. To confirm this, consider,

1. The perfect unity of the elect of God, is that which is purchased by the blood of Christ, and therefore must needs take effect. He died, "that he might gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad." Sin has built up a partition wall betwixt God and the elect, as well as others, and a partition dividing them among themselves. The sufferings of Christ, hath meritoriously thrown it down; upon which it must needs follow, that it will be actually thrown down by the Spirit of Christ beginning the work here, and afterwards perfecting it.

2. This unity is prayed for, by the great Mediator, whom the Father heareth always, and whose intercession must needs be effectual, John xvii. 21—23. He came into the world, to make up that rent which sin had made; and he is now at the Father's right hand pursuing the same design, never to leave it till it be perfected.

3. The same Spirit dwells in the head and in all the members, though not in the same measure; the same ointment poured on the high priest's own head, runs down to the skirts of his garments, and anoints all the members of Christ. Hence the apostle presseth unity from the fellowship of the Spirit, they being joint partakers of the one Spirit of God, Phil. ii. 1, 2. This Spirit hath begun that union, and is still at the uniting work; and it consists not with the honour of God, not to perfect that which he hath begun. For which cause the church may confidently say as David, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."

4. The occasion of the disordant judgments that are among the people of God, will at length be taken away. There is great darkness now, in those that have the greatest share of light and knowledge. The time we are in this world, is a night in comparison of the day of eternity that is approaching. No wonder we have every one our own mistakes; but where we are going, there is no night there. Now the most knowing, know but in part; but that which

is perfect will come, and then that which is in part will be done away. Now we are but children, and therefore want not our childish conceptions of heavenly things; but when we come to a perfect man, these childish things will be put away. Now we see but through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now we know but in part, but then shall know as we are known, most clearly and distinctly, as it is said, 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12. So truth being but one, our conceptions of it will be the same, when we shall be perfectly cast into the mould of truth.

Use 1. This lets us see that the people of God will at length arrive at unity of affections, lay aside all their jarrings, animosities, factions and divisions, and cordially embrace each other in the arms of perfect love. For the fountain being stopped, the streams must needs become dry; difference of judgment being that which occasions such discord and alienation of affections. This may comfort the godly, oppressed now with grief, because of these differences that are among the Lord's people.

2. It may let us see the odious nature of divisions and discords among professors. These tell us we are yet abroad, not at home. They look like the earth, and very unlike heaven. "Therefore," says Paul, "while one saith I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal." When we are better Christians, we will be more peaceable, and leave off to devour one another were we once in the ark above.

Use 2. Of exhortation. This serves to urge us to several duties.

1. To labour for unity, and "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "It is a pleasant thing for brethren to dwell in unity. It makes the church strong and terrible to enemies; whereas divisions do exceedingly weaken her, and make her a prey to the enemy. Blessed be the Lord for that unity which is yet among the ministers of this church; and long may it last, for be it broken when it will, the success of the gospel which is little now, will be less then. Men will be readily converted to a party, but few will be converted to Christ.

2. Let us bear with one another in love; knowing we are yet in the body, and have need of compassion. Let us pursue the quarrel against an ungodly world, enemies to God and godliness, because there is no hope of meeting in heaven to compose the difference; but see we any with their faces towards the heavenly Canaan, O let us not fall out by the way.

3. Let us long for heaven as the place where we will be happy. For motive hereto, consider,

Doctrine. IV. That the church of Christ shall at length arrive

at its full growth in glory, as a man come to perfect age. Then shall it be perfect in parts, every member being brought in, and in degrees every member being at its full growth. How does the heir long till the time of his minority be overpast, that he may get the inheritance in his hands. There is an eternal weight of glory abiding a state of perfection, when we shall know no more clouds of darkness and ignorance, no more weakness; but the weakest shall be as David, and David as the angel of God. When no corruption shall be in our mind, will, or affections; when faith shall be turned to sight, hope to enjoyment.

Doctrine V. Then, and not till then, comes the church to perfection, when every member thereof, is brought to a perfect conformity with Christ, bearing a just proportion to him, as members proportioned to the head. This will certainly come to pass. Mystical Christ is yet growing; the head is at perfection, but the members some of them are yet wanting: none of them that are here below, are grown up to the just proportion, but till that be, mystical Christ is not perfect. This is a certain argument that it shall be. Christ will not always have his body so disproportioned to the head. An infinitely holy head, will at length have perfectly holy members. The head that has now got above all temptations, will certainly draw the feet out of the reach of Satan and corruption. The head that has got above the waters of the shadow of death and corruption, will certainly make our vile bodies like his glorious body; and as he arose from death, and now it hath no more dominion over him, so will he confirm our souls and bodies in a glorious state of immortality. All which may make believers long for that blessed day, and endeavour to antedate heaven's happiness as far as they can, in the pursuit of conformity to Christ, and growing up to that blessed head; remembering that all their backslidings and decays dishonour him egregiously, in so disfiguring his body and disproportioning his members. For direction how to go on to this perfection, take

Doctrine VI. As is our faith and knowledge of Christ, so is our growth and perfection. It is the knowledge of Christ, that introduces us to the blessed state of perfection. The more we believe in, and know Christ, the nearer are we to perfection; and when these are come to their perfection, then are we at our full growth.

Let us then, that are ministers, make this our great work, to get people to close with Christ, and get acquainted with him. O! if we could preach Christ, live Christ, and make him the scope of our life and doctrine, it would be well. Let all of us study to know him. The nearest way to perfection is knowledge; and all things else

necessary to salvation is to know Christ, who is that body of divinity which the Spirit of God teaches his scholars, "for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face Jesus Christ." Amen.

November 10, 1706.

BELIEVERS HAVING TRIBULATION IN THE WORLD.

SERMON XXXII.

JOHN xvi. 33,

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

THIS is a dark and gloomy day, in which there seems to be a black cloud of wrath hanging over our heads; which if mercy prevent not, is like to fall heavy upon us; yet the storm never blows so hard, but the children of God may have peace; being, though upon a sea, yet in a ship that cannot sink. Our text is the conclusion of our Lord's farewell sermon to his disciples, in which we have the use and end of the whole, namely, that they might have peace. While he discoursed to them, he had in view their peace; that is inward peace and prosperity, contentment and quietness of mind in the midst of trouble. All this they might have in him; being united to him by faith, they might have peace in him, as Noah had in the ark, while the deluge was on the earth. His own word was the mean by which they were thus to obtain peace in him. This word leads the soul to Christ, where it may get peace, and teaches how to employ Christ for peace. "Unless thy law," says David, "had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction."

We have next the necessity of his speaking these things to them for that end. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." In this world they must lay their account to meet with tribulation. In heaven there is no trouble, in earth no rest. They shall have trouble in and from the world, as they have peace in and from Christ. Observe the certainty of all this; it is not, you may have,

but, "you shall have tribulation." They have no reason to be surprised with trouble. He warns them of it. There is no eviting of it. It is the common way to heaven, no going there otherwise.

We have also the duty of the Lord's people in tribulation, or under the fears of it, "Be of good cheer." (Greek), Be confident, over the belly of all you may meet with in the world. Keep up your hearts, faint not. The comfort is, Christ has overcome the world, and therefore though it may wound you, it shall not destroy you; and as surely as Christ himself has overcome, so surely shall ye overcome.

Doctrine 1. Jesus Christ freely forewarns his people of the trouble with which they are to meet in his way.

Here we shall shew *First*, how; and *Secondly*, why he forewarns them.

I. We are to shew how the Lord forewarns his people.

1. He forewarns them by his word. So he does here in the text. Now Christ speaks to us by his written word, and by his ministers, whom he has set as watchmen, to blow the trumpet and give warning. In the glass of the word they may discern troubles coming on. The Scriptures are like a weather-glass, in which the people of God may discern by parallel cases, what may be expected in such and such circumstances.

2. By the dispensations of providence. There are signs of the times, Matth. xvi. 3. These are, 1. Ordinary; when a people is brought to such circumstances as naturally tend to some heavy judgment. Thus our Lord said, "every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." This seems to be our case at present. The divisions among our rulers in the important matter now in hand, and divisions among others on the same point, say that if God do not interpose by a miracle of providence for our help, we may be in a sad case ere long, 2 Kings vi. 27. Surely there is a sad infatuation on some side; while some look upon it as the way to make us happy, and others as the way to make us and our posterity miserable. 2. Extraordinary. Extraordinary operations in natural things, Luke xxi. 25. By such means the Lord has warned us, and these extraordinary rains may possibly have a voice to stir us up. Sometimes the Lord writes the fate of a nation upon the walls of the great house of the world, as he did Belshazzar's on the walls of his palace.

II. We are to shew why Christ forewarns his people.

1. To take away the scandal of the cross. Often did our Lord tell his disciples what he was, and what they were to suffer, that

when these things came to pass they might not be offended. These that give up their names to Christ, and do not lay their accounts with trouble, they will prove like those, "who when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." It is hard not to stumble when people meet with an unexpected block in their way.

2. That his people may be forewarned. "Therefore, thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." God's people are not always meet for a storm. Lot may linger in Sodom; Baruch seek great things for himself; the wise virgins slumber while the bridegroom is on the way. It is hard to stand in an evil day, but most hard when we are surprised with it. Job had an advantage; "I was not," says he, "in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came."

3. Because he would have his people choose his way resolutely; so as when they engage with him, they may be resolute to cleave to him, come what will. He would have men either not to build, or else to count the cost; either never to venture the sea, or else to be resolute to ride out the storm. The devil flatters men into his way, lets them see the bait, but not the hook. Christ holds the crown in the one hand, and the cross in the other, and the cross nearest the sinner, Luke xiv. 26.

4. To stir up his people to come to him, renew their acceptance, and get matters of controversy removed. Christ loves to have his people about his hand, but in a time of peace, they are ready to wander, then he will make fears to bring them back again. When the weather is clear, they go abroad; but when the clouds grow black, they return to their chambers, Isa. xxvi. 20.

Use 1. Of information. 1. Christ loves not to take his people at an unawares, though he often does so with his enemies, Matth. xxiv. 50. The news of the axe being laid to the root of the tree, comes to be heard commonly, before the noise of its hewing. Sometimes he surprises his people with kindness, Song ii. 8; Psal. cxxvi. 1; but as for judgments, if people are not aware of their coming, it is not for want of warning.

2. The way of the Lord is well worth the keeping, notwithstanding the trouble we may meet with in it. If there were not enough in it to counterbalance the trouble, why would he forewarn his people. But there is that sweet in the crown, that may well make us digest the cross. Moses puts the treasures of Egypt and the reproach of Christ into a balance, and counts this reproach the greatest riches.

3. God's people cannot justly pretend that they are surprised with trouble. It becomes not a Christian to say, I had not thought of them. We may indeed be surprised with prosperity—wonder to see streams in the south—to meet with kindness, when abroad from our country; and therefore they are inexcusable, that are unprovided for an evil day. What! not to provide in summer for the winter, when we know surely it will come.

4. Let not the world say God's people serve an ill master. If he chastise, he tells his people beforehand, that they may provide for a storm. The devil leads his blindfold to the pit, but Christ warns his people of every dangerous step, he deals ingeniously with them, telling them what they may expect in his service.

Doctrine II. That the church and people of God must lay their accounts with trouble in the world. Here we shall shew,

I. What is imported in this, that, "in the world ye shall have tribulation."

II. What these tribulations are, with which they may lay their account.

III. To confirm the doctrine,

IV. How, and in what manner, the Lord dispenseth tribulations.

V. Give the reasons why they shall have tribulation. We are then,

I. To shew what is imported in this, that, "in the world ye shall have tribulation." It imports,

1. That this world is not the place of our rest. Heaven is our home; earth our pilgrimage. To whom earth is a rest, hell will be a place of trouble. As long as we are here, we are on the sea, where deep calleth unto deep. If there be a fair blink for a while, a storm is brewing; and so will it be till we reach the shore, where a rest remaineth for the people of God.

2. That the saints shall have trouble from the men of the world. This I take to be included in the text. There are Canaanites in the land, that will be thorns in our eyes. As the Israelites were in Egypt, so is the church of God in the world. They are two distinct kingdoms that will never unite, as belonging to two so different masters, the God of heaven, and the God of this world.

3. That the troubles of the Lord's people shall go no farther with them than this world; when they have passed the sea of death, they shall see them no more. The world is the only stage for acting this tragedy, and when that is taken down, no other shall be erected. Devils and men, can pursue the Lord's people no farther than a grave. God shall then wipe away all tears from their eyes. Heaven is the place of the crown; the world of the cross.

4. The certainty of their meeting with tribulation. It is no doubtful or uncertain thing. It is beyond all peradventure. There is no escaping of it; the world one way or another, will be about with the people of God. No corn comes to heaven's granery, but what is winnowed here below. As long as the seed of the serpent is within bowshot of the seed of the woman, they cannot be secure.

II. We are to shew what these tribulations are, which the people of God may lay their account with in the world. I shall name some, not knowing but some or all of them may be our case; but there is no hazard of laying our account with the worst.

1. We find sometimes the enemies of the Lord's people rule over them. So it was in Egypt, Babylon, and other places. It is a sad threatening, "the stranger that is within thee, shall get up above thee very high, and thou shalt come down very low." So we find it often in the book of Judges, their neighbours ruling over them. Sometimes a professing people cast off God's yoke, no wonder that he wreath the yoke of strangers about their necks. It is much the same whether it be violently put on, or they stoop tamely and receive it; but always the church of God is brought to a sad state, when the wolf gets Christ's sheep to keep, and they are subjected to professed enemies of the work of reformation. O pray that God may direct the parliament in the matter of the union. They and we have to do with potent neighbours. Our rulers are wiser than we, to know what will be best for this poor land, unless the sins of the nation provoke God to make them blind. But surely these hundred years bypast, the poverty this poor land has groaned under, and the troubles the church of Scotland has had, were much owing to the influence of our neighbours, and it will be next to a miracle, if our prosperity come from that quarter.

2. Cruel mockings, Heb. xi. 36. This was the persecution which Ishmael set on foot against Isaac. The seed of the serpent are wont to spit their venom from under their tongues. Seldom are Christians free from these, for the tongues of enemies are not always restrained, when their hands are bound. O but it is sad when the enemy have the Lord's people under their feet, then their tongues are as sharp swords, Psal. cxxxvii. 3; Lam. i. 7.

3. Loss of their goods, Heb. x. 34. If God let loose the sword upon the nation, or if persecution arise, losses cannot be prevented. When there are loaves to be had by following Christ, he will have a large retinue; but when Christ and the world parts, then must we either part with Christ or with the world. O! for the spirit of Moses, to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. To have

the world's goods about us like Joseph's mantle, that stript off easily in a time of temptation. Let their money perish with themselves, who esteem all the gold in the world worth a day's society with Jesus Christ, said the Marquis of Vicy.

4. Loss of liberty. Often those that now follow the Lamb, have been in bonds and prisons, banished from their native country, deprived of the society of their relations, hunted as partridges on the mountains, and what has been, may be.

5. Want of pure ordinances. Often the gates of Zion have mourned, because none were allowed to enter them. The people of God have sought the food of their souls with the peril of their lives; their teachers being removed into corners, and dumb dogs set up in their stead, who have hardened the hearts of the wicked, and discouraged the godly. Alas! our contempt of the gospel, may bring a famine of it. The word of the Lord is more precious, when there is no open vision.

Lastly, Bodily torments even to death, Luke xiv. 26. All God's people must be martyrs in action or affection. Those that love not Christ better than their own lives, love him not all sincerely. Sometimes Christ calls his people to resist even unto blood. Such days have been, and Cain's club is still carried up and down the world, stained with the blood of Abel. A generation of blood-suckers yet exists to make the scaffolds smoke with the blood of the saints. In a word, whatever the wit of devils can invent, and men practise, and God will permit, the people of God may lay their account with. Yet we must remark it is tribulation, not destruction, the church of God is to expect. She may be in tribulation, and yet come out of many tribulations; and therefore for the comfort of the Lord's people, I will say five things:

1. Enemies may be a wind to toss this ark up and down the waters of affliction, yet not a rock to split her. "We are troubled," says Paul, "on every side; yet not dismayed! we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed." Nay, the church shall be a rock, on which her enemies shall split, Zech. xii. 2, 3, 4. Men will be meddling with her to hurt her, if they can better their estate by it; but if they prosper it will be a wonder, for never did any meddle with the church but to their cost. The same power still exists that drowned Pharaoh, and brought Haman to the gallows which he had set up for Mordecai.

2. The bush may be set on fire, but it shall not be consumed, Exod. iii. 2. The church shall lose nothing by it but her dross, Zech. xiii. 9; but that shall at length burst out on the enemies, like the fiery furnace into which the three children were cast.

3. They may drive here into the wilderness, but she shall be fed there, Rev. xii. 6; as it was in the days of Elijah. What will we do, you may say, if ordinances be taken away; why, if there be nothing in the wilderness, God will open the windows of heaven. The doors of heaven are not always closed, when the doors of the church are closed. God is in heaven, yea Christ is there, and he shall be for a sanctuary.

4. They may hew down her branches, but the root shall remain fast in the earth, and shall bud again. It is a sad sight to see men go to with axes and hammers, and cut down the carved work of Zion. But let it be never so low, it will rise like a terrible ghost to enemies.

Lastly, Enemies may carry the church of God to the brow of the hill, and leave her on the very brink of ruin, and yet she shall escape singing, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped." How did Pharaoh think he had them all in his net, but the children of Israel went out with an high hand. We now proceed,

III. To confirm this, that in the world the saints shall have tribulation.

1. God has expressly told us of it. What can be more peremptory than the text, "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom;" and all who live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. It is one of the articles of the Christian's indenture, to take up the cross and follow Christ. The way to the crown is by the cross, by virtue of God's appointment. It is true, the Lord does not call every one to be a martyr, but every one that honestly engageth with Christ, engageth in these terms, that if they should die for him, they shall not leave him.

2. This has been the lot of the church in all ages. There was a Cain in Adam's family, an Ishmael in Abraham's, and an Esau in Isaac's. Christ's flock has always had their noon, as well as their morning. Silence in heaven, is but for half an hour.

3. This was the lot of our Lord and Captain. He endured the cross, despising the shame; and they that will reign with him, must resolve to suffer with him also. It is vain to expect other treatment in the world than he got. The servant is not greater than the Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

4. There is so much corruption in the best, that they cannot long carry a full cup even, but when they stand they gather mud. They have need of affliction to keep them from, or awaken them out of security.

5. They live among ill neighbours, even the wicked of the world, who have influence on their calamities several ways. They are ever ready to do them a mischief when they have an opportunity. We have had long peace, but not because enemies were idle, not because they had no plots and contrivances to injure the work of God, but because providence defeated, and may even defeat them yet. Besides their wickedness provokes God against the nation, to bring on national judgments, in which the Lord's people must needs share, especially considering, that the godly themselves are, some one way or another, often involved in their guilt; as by growing lukewarm when iniquity abounds, not mourning over the sins of others. No wonder God send an earthquake into Scotland, for the profane principles and practices of some, and the deadness of others.

Lastly, The devil is a restless enemy. He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; and he is not to blame, if the church of God has a moment's rest. He wants neither will, power, nor instruments, to vex the church, if he could but get permission.

IV. We are to shew how, and in what manner the Lord dispenseth tribulation to his church and people. I will say these four things respecting it:

1. The church and people of God frequently meet with tribulations in the world. It is seldom that this ark meets not with tossing, till it come to rest on the mount of God.

2. Sometimes the church of God has tribulation, while enemies have no such thing, Zech. i. 11, 12. Often it is so, as that when the one goes up, the other goes down; yet sometimes both are in the furnace of common calamity. Thus, both Jacob's family, and his neighbours the Canaanites, were visited with famine at the same time. When it is thus, the good metal is to be refined, and the dross consumed. The Lord can punish his people for their sins, and yet enemies have no cause to triumph over them, 2 Chron. xv. 3—5.

3. Sometimes the tribulation of the Lord's people is greater, sometimes less; it is not always alike hot, nor the clouds alike full. They may suffer much, and not be brought to resist unto blood. The Lord can bind up man's wrath, and say to it as to the sea, hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther. Devils and men are bound with the chain of providence. The tribulation ordinarily is hottest, when it is to last but a short time. When the devil's time is short, his wrath is great, Exod. v. 10, 11. Again, it is hottest when the Lord has a mind to do great things for his people and cause, but there is a generation whom he will have out of the way

beforehand. This was the case with the Israelites in the wilderness, because they had tempted the Lord ten times, and had not hearkened to his voice: they were not permitted to see the land which he sware unto their fathers, but were all taken away before he accomplished the promise, Num. xiv. 22; for this cause, sore shaking commonly goes before God's great appearances for his people, Hag. ii. 7. O! that this may not be the generation which God intends to shovel out of the way, before he revive his work. Once more, tribulation is hottest when people through long ease have settled in security, and defection has come to a great height. When a people thus leave their first love, unless they repent, God threatens to come quickly and to remove their candlestick out of his place. It is a dreadful case to provoke God to unchurch a people. The longer the disease has grown, the more difficult is the cure. A stubborn heart requires a violent wound. It is hard to say, if ever there was so much profanity in principle and practice under such light, as at this day. And it is too like the Lord is about to work that work, that may, by the hearing of it, make the securest and profanest heart to tremble.

4. Ordinarily, all goes not together with the people of God; if they be under heavy troubles, yet they may get the gospel preserved. "Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers." Though there may be darkness through most of the land, yet there may be a Goshen where light is. Though they seek it with the peril of their lives, yet they may obtain it. God's chamber doors of protection are not commonly all shut together. When you are persecuted in one city, flee to another. We have often seen it thus in Europe, when persecution was hot in one country, Christians have found an asylum in another. But, if all should fail together, God himself remains, and the saints may encourage themselves in him. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children shall have a place of refuge." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." We proceed,

V. To give reason why the saints shall have tribulations. The church and people of God meet with tribulations in the world for good reasons. They may say to those who are their scourges, as Joseph did to his brethren, "But, as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." God in such dispensations, has an eye,

I. To his own glory.

II. His people's good.

III. To hypocrites.

IV. To open enemies.

I. To his own glory. This is the end of all providences, and of this in a special manner, which should make the yoke light to those to whom his honour is dear. What if God should demolish the whole fabric of the creation for his own glory, who could quarrel him in point of justice. Surely we ought in that case, in our last prayers, say, "Hallowed be thy name." Now there is a large revenue of glory to God, rising from the tribulations of his people, though they were watered with their blood.

1. There is a large revenue of glory arises to him from his bringing them into tribulations. Hence he has the glory of his holiness before the world. "I will," says he, "be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people, I will be glorified." The people of God by their sins, darken the glory of his holiness; but in their tribulations, they are blind that may not read that, Hab. i. 13. David made enemies to blaspheme, therefore David must smart to retrieve the glory of God, 2 Sam. xii. 14. The sins of the people of God raise such a mist, that the holy nature of God is not well perceived, but a violent stormy wind, will scatter that mist. God gets also the glory of his impartiality in his judgments, Isa. xlii. 24; Amos iii. 2. The Lord thereby shews that his own shall not get away with their sins and defections, more than others. He spared not his own Son, nor will he spare his sons. He is a Father that loves his children, and therefore spares not the rod. The heaviest weight in the ship of the church that threatens her sinking, is the sins of sons and daughters, Deut. xxxii. 18, 19. One sleeping Jonah here, will do more evil than a whole crew of pagan mariners.

2. He gets glory from his keeping them up under them. Should his people sink under them, then his glory is lost, but the everlasting arms are underneath them; hence they are kept up, and carried through, though they go through fire and water; and hence God has the glory of his all-sufficiency. The devil said, Job served not God for nought. The world says, the Lord's people speak much of Christ's fulness; but it is easy swimming while the head is borne above; they even need the world to complete their satisfaction, as well as others. Well, tribulation comes, and the world sees then, that the godly can rejoice in God when all is gone; and that they look as well as they that feed on the portion of the king's meat. O! how do they live? Why, they live by faith on an all-sufficient God. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." "Godliness with con-

tentment is great gain." God has also the glory of his power, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. The saints living in the midst of deaths, says that Christ lives. The life of Jesus is made manifest in the mortal flesh. The three children walking in the midst of the fiery furnace, says there is a powerful one with them. The church of God, is often in the world, like a spark of fire in a sea. It is infinite power that keeps it unextinguished. Here also, he gets the glory of his unchangeable love to his people: this explains these words, "Be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Do they not fear in the valley of the shadow of death, it is because God is with them. What must spectators say, when they see them casten at all hands, and yet taken up by him, but behold how he loves them. Conscience will say it, though corruptions talk otherwise.

3. He gets glory, from his making them better by them. Tribulations rub sore upon the Lord's people, but by that means they are made clear vessels fit for the master's use, and so his house is made to shine; and thus he has the glory of his wisdom. O! what wisdom must be there, to bring life out of death, to cure by killing, and heal by wounding. This is to bring a heaven out of a hell. Here wisdom attains many precious ends, and all by one mean that the world would think destructive. He hath also the glory of his goodness he intends them good, and does them good even in the worst cases. He gets the glory of his own grace in them. The heat of the fire hardens clay, but softens wax; because of the different temper of the objects. The grace of God in a soul, never so readily appears, either to others or to the person himself, as in a time of affliction. Then they are like a sick man rising out of his bed and running for his bare life.

4. He gets glory from his bringing them out of them. This he will do. "For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.' If he bring his people into the fire, he will bring them out also; for he says, "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." Though they be sifted among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. Though enemies may say, as to the tribulation, the Lord hath not done all this; yet as to the deliverance, when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Hence the Lord has the glory: 1. Of his wisdom, in bringing it about in such a manner as is often unexpected. What wisdom appeared in his delivering Jacob's family from the famine, by sending Joseph to

Egypt; and the Jews from Haman's conspiracy. The glory also of his power: For God's time of appearing is often when there is least hope, and the case is most desperate, Deut. xxii. 36. He raiseth Christ mystical, when the gravestone is laid on and sealed, when it comes to that, Can these dead bodies live? and none can answer the question but himself. "Thy dead men," says he "shall live; together with my dead body, shall they arise."

The glory also of his faithfulness. The Lord will bring his people to that with it, that they shall have a very strong faith, that lays not down that conclusion: "I said my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." The providence and the promise of God seemed so to run counter to one another, that Jeremiah upon that was brought to the borders of blasphemy: "Why," said he, "is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt thou be altogether unto me as as a liar; and as waters that fail?" And enemies may be brought to say, there is no help for the afflicted saint in God. But the deliverance confounds the one, and makes the other blush; and writes his faithfulness in great characters. Thus he magnifies his word; above all his name.

II. In such dispensations God has an eye to his people's good. It is their happiness that his glory and their good are linked together. As all work for his glory, so all shall work for their good, Rom. viii. 28. I shall pitch on a few things here. It is,

1. to purge away their sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. Tribulation to the Lord's people, is as the furnace to the gold; not to consume, but refine them. It is not to purge them away meritoriously, but they are the means which the Spirit of God makes use of to weaken our corruptions. Now they contribute to this three ways: 1. As they convince of sin. They are as the fire under the pot, that brings the scum up, and so it falls off. It is difficult to convince men of prosperous wickedness, Jer. xxii. 21, 22. Solomon tells us, "that oppression makes a wise man mad;" but a greater than Solomon tells us, tribulation makes a mad man wise, Luke xv. 17; Gen. xlii. 21. Misery will open the eyes which prosperity has closed. If the gospel be taken away, it will not be so difficult to convince you of misimprovement, as it is now. Again, they make sin bitter. As Abner said to Joab of the war, so is it with sin: "It will be bitterness in the end." It is like Ezekiel's roll, sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly; thus it makes the man vomit up with loathing, what with delight he swallowed down. The wormwood and the gall being laid on the breast, weans the child at length. Once more, they do it as they lead to repentance, Hos. ii. 7. Repentance is the native product of a blessed tribulation. Let us search and try our ways,

and turn again to the Lord. Waters of affliction make the head of the gracious soul waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears for sin. Some now, they cannot get mourned for sin; but if a sword come, if the glory depart, the hard rock will stream out in the wilderness.

2. To prevent further sin, and more dreadful plagues. Tribulation is a hedge in people's way, meeting them as the angel did Balaam. Well may the children of God salute the cross, as David did Abigail: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me." By this, much mischief was prevented. It was a weary way which the Israelites had in the wilderness. But wherefore did God lead them that way? It was to keep them from drawing back, Exod. xiii. 17, 18. When a church takes a backsliding, they would go very far back ere they halted, if God did not turn them with affliction. Thus it prevents more dreadful plagues, 1 Cor. xi. 32. It was a tribulation to Lot to go out of Sodom, but had he not met with that, he had met with much worse. Many a time God drags people out of harm's way, as he did a godly man, who broke his leg going into a ship, which made him return. This saved him, for the ship was cast away. So God may cast a church or person into trouble, to prevent the casting them off.

To promote the spiritual growth of the Lord's people. The plants in God's vineyard, grow best in the winter. The church is like camomile, the pressing it down makes it thrive best; so it was with Israel in Egypt. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. The church has more professors in prosperity than in tribulation, but more true Christians probably in an evil day. In such a time the graces of the Lord's people are stronger. Sometimes they have run with the footmen, and they have wearied them; yet have they afterwards contended with horses. So Peter, who at one time by cowardice denied his Master, at another astonished his enemies with his boldness. So it was also with Nicodemus. The graces of the Lord's people are like the waters of the sun mentioned by Curtius, which are cold at noon when the air is hottest, and hot at midnight when the air is coldest.

The Lord's people have most experiences at such a time, Rom. v. 3, 4. They gain a stock of experiences in the school of tribulation, Hos. ii. 14. We have many professed Christians at this day, but few experienced Christians. Who knows but the Lord may lead them to the wilderness, and speak to their hearts there, that when they come back they may be able to say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." Now, it is highly reasonable that these things be so, because they have more than ordinary to do in such a time, and God suits people's

strength to their burdens. They could not stand without more experience of religion; and the glory of God is at the stake, which would be wounded if they fell away. Besides, tribulation leads the soul to more than ordinary seriousness, self-denial, and going out of itself to Christ. In such a time also, they are feasted with a greater variety of providences than at other times.

4. The humiliation of his people, Deut. viii. 2. I take special notice of this, because it is the great design of the gospel, to make the sinner nothing in his own eyes, that the Lord's grace may get all the glory. This is the end of ordinances and providences, and is remarkably carried on by tribulation.

Tribulation serves this purpose, as it discovers the corruption of the heart that lurked before. Asaph's tribulation brought his heart atheism to light, Psal. lxxiii. 13. See how that humbles him, ver. 22; it will discover that particular corruption, which of all others, the man seemed to be most above. Thus, the impatience of Job, and the passion of Moses were discovered, though the one was the most patient, and the other the meekest man on earth.

It humbles the person also, as it makes him feel the need of daily supplies and support from above. When a man gets a burden to bear, for which he finds he has not strength enough, this sends him to God out of himself. The greatness of it affrights him. Hence may we see the reason why some people are helped to bear great troubles, while they sink under less ones.

Lastly, The weaning their hearts from the world, and making them desirous to be in heaven. If they were not so harshly entertained abroad, they might forget their home. But the more perplexities they meet with in the wilderness, the more desireable will Canaan be to them. No wonder they long to be ashore, who are tossed with the wind and wave upon the sea. But blow what storms will, against the church and people of God, the Lord does all things well; for the more the waters increase, the nearer heaven is the ark.

III. The Lord has an eye to hypocrites, in bringing tribulation on the church, to try and discover them. Times of tribulation are winnowing and sifting times, Matth. iii. 10, 12; Amos ix. 9.

The summer of the church's prosperity breeds much vermin, which the winter dispatches. Many follow Christ for loaves, and are like those that go to sea for pleasure. They flame a while; but as the candle, go out with a bad smell, when the wind blows. Now they are cast out, for likely they did not count the cost before they began to build, hence they are surprized with tribulation. The cross is placed in the dark to them, therefore they fall over it, Matth.

viii. 19, 20. What is undeliberately attempted, seldom succeeds where difficulties are in the way.

Again, hypocrites want the root of grace in them, hence a storm blows them over, Matth. xiii. 21. How can a house built on sand endure a storm? Lamps without oil may do much in a fair day, but nothing in a dark night. The real spring will hold out in a time of scorching heat but the pools will be dried up.

In tribulation, people must either live on Christ alone, or not at all. Hypocrites cannot do this, more than a bird can fly without wings. The hypocrite is the man with the heart and the heart; therefore, like the hurcheon, he changes his nest, according to the blowing of the north and south wind. His lusts are his limbs, therefore he must cut his shoe answerable to his foot.

IV. The Lord has an eye to open enemies, to bring vengeance to them. The Israelites were in a great strait at the Red sea, but it was that Pharaoh and his host might be drowned, see also Dan. iii. 22. The Lord allows enemies to fill up their cup, and then he punishes them, and the punishment comes heaped and running over, Matth. xxii. 35, 36. The tribulation of the Lord's people, is a certain forerunner of the destruction of enemies, Mic. iv. 11—13; the rod having done its work, is for the fire.

Use. Prepare then for tribulation. Lay your account with it, and make ready for it. This is a day in which we should be about Noah's work, even preparing an ark. Consider these three things:

1. The Lord has a controversy with the land, and he seems to be about to plead it; and when God's anger has set the nation in a flame, it will be hard for the Lord's people to escape tribulation. There are several things, for which the Lord seems to be about to pursue Scotland this day; such as the sins of late times, and here we find covenant breaking the mother evil, Ezek. xvii. 15. This land lies under a double guilt here. The breach of the national covenant, which was first made early after our reformation from popery, and afterwards several times renewed, and much countenanced of God. The solemn league and covenant now buried in England, and now much forgotten in Scotland, in both which, prelacy was abjured. But alas! the nation soon forgot his covenant. Prelacy, like the accursed walls of Jericho, was rebuilt; the Lord's people that adhered to the oath of God and covenanted work of reformation, were persecuted for the same; fined, imprisoned, banished, carried into remote corners of the world, and many of them murdered under colour of law. The covenant itself burned. God has not forgotten these things yet. The late fire in Edinburgh, which set on flames his vast buildings that burnt the covenant, was

a visible token of the Lord's minding that quarrel: and now I think the Lord is saying, as he did to Israel, I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant.

There is also the contempt of the gospel now abounding. How little is Christ cared for in our land; his offers are slighted, his reproofs undervalued. We have begun to weary of God, and our souls loathe the manna.

There is, moreover, much profanity in principles and practices. It is with us as with the Jews, both the poor and the rich have erred, Jer. v. 4, 5. Who could have thought, that in such a day, deism and atheism could have so abounded. Many ridicule the scriptures, and the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ; and so give themselves up to work all uncleanness with greediness. Pagan countries produce not such monsters. The matter is, men are given up to their lusts, the word galls them, and therefore they endeavour to extinguish all sense of religion, that they may sin without remorse.

2. The Lord has a controversy with his own people. How little sense have we of God's mighty works? In what security have we been of a long time? Little care to walk with God. Carnality, formality, worldly mindedness, lukewarmness in the things of God, presage a storm of tribulation.

3. The present state of affairs says a cloud is gathering. They that have but half an eye may see it.

Directions. 1. Make sure work as to your interest in Christ, Matth. vii. 24—27. The months of tribulation are trying to hypocritical professors. If you be in Christ you shall not be removed. The temptations and dangers to which people are exposed in tribulations, speak loudly to them to turn to their strong hold, Zech. ix. 12. O that they would now come that have hitherto refused him. A man out of Christ in tribulation, is a sad spectacle.

2. Keep grace in exercise. Take that advice, "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first work." See there be no standing controversy betwixt God and you. "If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us." Outward trouble, and the frowns of an angry God, are sad companions. These months are trying to them that are under a spiritual consumption; it will be difficult for them to stand.

3. Prudently forecast what may befall you, and lay your accounts that way. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on and are punished." A warned man is half armed. Men surprised seldom resist. A man newly awakened out of his dream, may be easily overcome.

4. Be temperate in all things, and live above the world, its frowns, and smiles. Be moderate in your affections and cares about any worldly enjoyments. Use the world as if you used it not. Let it hang loose about you, like Joseph's mantle.

5. Labour to be concerned about your relations now. Solemnly give them away to God with respect to an evil day. In a troublesome time, people use to carry their precious things to any place where they may be safe. Husbands, wives, children, cannot be so safe as in Christ. Commit them to him, and trust him with them without anxiety. Strive also to get them possessed with real love to Christ and his truths, that they may be more afraid of sinning, than of suffering, for their influence may do you good or evil, as they are disposed.

6. Labour to have a feeling of the truth and power of religion on your souls. A mere form of godliness will not help in tribulation. If religion be not in the heart, but only in the head, it will melt away like snow before the sun. He that sees Christ by an eye of faith, and sees heaven afar off, has the trial of the efficacy and power of the truth on his soul, will be able to endure a blast. Therefore closely study practical godliness.

Lastly, Be much in prayer. Prayer opens the windows of heaven, James v. 18. Pray for yourselves, for the nation, for posterity, for the church, and for the world. It is a sad symptom a man has no part of the ship, when he is not concerned whether she sink or swim. Prayer has opened prison doors, Acts xvi. 26; and held off wrath, Exod. xxxii. 10. And who knows what the prayers of the Lord's people may do yet. It is a mercy that we may pray, Mic. vii. 3—7.

Objection 1. There will always be safety on some side, and I will fall in with them that are uppermost. Answer. If the Bible be the word of God, this is not the way to be safe. "Whoso walketh uprightly, shall be saved; but he that is perverse in his ways, shall fall at once." If you shift so, you will not be on God's side; and often men by seeking safety out of God's way, hasten their own destruction, as the Jews crucified Christ to please the Romans. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake," saith Jesus, "shall find it."

Objection 2. I fear I never shall be able to stand in an evil day. Answer. Deal thou honestly with Christ. Tell him sincerely you are content to go through fire and water with him, if he will but bear you up, that you sink not; and trust him for through bearing, and then it lies upon his honour to carry you through, and he will do it, Isa. xl. 30, 31; 2 Cor. xii. 9.

But is there no way to be sure of temporal safety when tribulation comes? ANSWER. Without more than ordinary, neither you nor I can promise that to ourselves. We may promise inward peace, but not outward. Yet some may even get much outward safety. I will tell you the way that bids fairest for it. Mourn now for the sins of the land; that has the promise, Ezek. ix. 4. Keep close to the way of duty, whatever be the hazard, Prov. xxviii. 18. To be best when others are worst bids fair for it. This was the case with Noah, who was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. But all outward things are uncertain; only in the general, if you be his, he will do what will be best.

But behold, our text opens up a magazine of comfort in the worst of times: "That in me ye might have peace." From whence observe this doctrine,

Whatever storms blow in the world, in Jesus Christ we may have peace, in the midst of outward troubles. Here I shall speak *first* of the nature ot this peace. *Secondly*, of the enjoyment of it. *Thirdly*, of the way of conveyance. *Fourthly*, of its kind; and *fifthly*, confirm the point. I am then,

I. To speak of the nature of the peace to be enjoyed in Christ. It is an inward peace, being opposed to outward trouble. The trouble is bodily, and on the outward state; the peace is spiritual. It is the peace of mind. Inward trouble is the native consequence of outward trouble. But here is a sort of miracle, the godly in the fire, yet walking at ease; the ship amongst rocks and waves, yet secure. Taking this inward peace of mind in its full latitude, it comprehends,

1. A holy calm in the soul, a serenity and tranquillity of mind in the midst of trouble. Trouble naturally produces inward confusion and disturbance; but the soul has in Christ a calm instead of that, Psal. iii. 1—5. The believer is like a vessel of water tossed upon the sea, yet not jumbled. In the fiery furnace, the three children had more peace than the king in his palace, Dan. iii. 24.

2. Content of mind, in opposition to discontent and murmuring, which are the native effects of trouble in a soul out of Christ. Contentment is not only the duty but the privilege of believers, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. To be content with a full cup is nothing; but grace can make a man content with an empty house and empty coffers. And what does a man want, whose spirit is brought down to his lot? Many a man has been so well content with the cross, that he would not have exchanged with them that were at ease, for the crown.

3. Courage and holy boldness, instead of discouragement, Acts

iv. 13. Christ raiseth the hearts of his people in trouble. He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. When he says fear not, their fears are dispelled; their spirits raised to do and to suffer great things for him without fear. And never is the believer so acquainted with Christ's comforts, as in a day when fears are on every side. He loves to make them experience that his grace is sufficient for them.

4. Confidence as to the event, in opposition to anxiety and despair. "For the which cause," says Paul, "I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Trouble stirs up the godly to wait on the Lord, and roll their concerns on him, and lay down all their cares in his bosom. This has the promise, for he hath said, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass." There is light in Goshen, when there is darkness over all the rest of the land. When providences are a dark cloud, which they cannot see through, faith goes to the promises, and there they get a sight of a blessed outgate, and will say, he has done, and will do all things well.

5. Joy in trouble instead of sorrow. They have a sweet feast. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience. They are not stocks, to stand unmoved at the loss of goods, liberty, and the like; but their sorrow is only as it were a quashed sorrow, it is so drowned in spiritual joy. They are as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Paul and Silas sang praises at midnight in the prison, and the Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Strengthening grace will bear them out in their singing, as long as the enemy's malice will bear them in their raging. The saints are strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and long suffering, with joyfulness.

6. Prosperity of soul. The suffering Christian is by Christ made like Gaius, to prosper, and be in health in his soul. This Paul felt, for says he, though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. The world is a very rugged physician to the godly; but the truth is, they never thrive better than when under its hand. We are now,

II. To speak of the enjoyment of this peace in peace. The text says, In me ye might, rather may have peace. This lets us see that something must be done, in order to get it. There is a twofold enjoyment of this peace in trouble.

1. An enjoyment of it in the root and seed of it. In this respect believers always have this peace in trouble. For the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. They are like the heir while a minor, having a right to an estate, though there be not a farthing in his pocket.

2. An enjoyment of it by actual tasting thereof, when the troubled mind is really pacified, the winds rebuked, and God creates a calm in the soul, giving them all these sure, whereby they are made happy. Here I lay down these two conclusions, imported in this phrase:

1. The believer is liable to a want of inward peace in a time of outward trouble. This is manifest in Job, Heman, and others. Sometimes the wind blows upon them from all quarters at once. And thus it is ordinarily with them in such cases as these:—1. When the disease to be cured is grown inveterate. Every puff of wind will not rend rocks, nor blow up oaks by the roots. Samson for three several times had seen Delilah's deceit, yet would not take warning. Hence often it is thus with the Lord's people when the storm rises first, where the inward trouble continues till they renew their repentance. 2. When to allay their outward trouble, they step aside out of God's way, yielding to the temptation to get the trouble lessened, it is made greater by the accession of the want of inward peace. Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. This makes a molehill a mountain, for there is no safety but in an upright way. 3. When they grow impatient under trouble. The Lord will have them see where the sting of trouble is; and by making them feel the smart of a wounded spirit, will teach them what they would not believe, namely, that a man may bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear. 4. When the Lord intends to appear with a more than ordinary measure of his peace and comfort. The saddest conflicts commonly go before the greatest victory. It is God's way to kill before he cure.

2. As there is a seed of inward peace in the believer's soul amidst the greatest trouble, so it shall surely spring up at length, Mic. vii. 8, 9. There is a heaven in their hottest hell, which will break forth in due time. Their light shall rise, and their seed of joy spring. They have great security for this. I shall only point at one thing in the text, that is Christ's designing it for them. He is God, his counsel shall stand. What he designs for them they shall surely get, especially considering he has purchased peace at so dear a rate to bestow on them. What though their case be low and almost desperate, yet he can give them peace, and speak peace to them, even as he spake light into being, when darkness was

on the face of the world. Though the mouth be filled only with complaints, yet creating power can make praises come from the same lips. "I create," says the Lord, "the fruit of the lips, peace; peace to him that is afar off and to him that is near and I will heal him." Wherefore, it being God's design that they may have it, they shall have it in the worst of times.

III. We are to consider the way of conveyance of this peace. It is in Christ. This imports,

1. That we must be in him before we can have this true peace. All out of this ark are out of the true peace. Men may have the devil's peace, while they sleep in his chains. But God's peace is only to them that lay hold on God's peace-maker. Let him, says God, take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me. What hast thou to do with peace, O sinner, so long as thou art out of Christ? For God is their enemy who are not in Christ, for by him only are we reconciled to God. Who can have true peace while God is their enemy, whose attributes do speak terror to them. He is just, holy, every where present, and almighty. He is merciful indeed, but only in Christ. Conscience also is their enemy. It is God's deputy, who faileth not sometimes to say to the wicked, that it shall be ill with him. And though it may be laid asleep a while, yet that will only make its awakening more terrible, and it is only Christ's blood that sprinkles from an evil conscience. All the creatures are likewise their enemies. Christ is the bond of the creatures, who were set one against another by Adam's sin; and therefore it is a benefit of the new covenant, peace with the creatures. Men out of Christ have no more security in the use of the creatures, than an usurper in his throne, against whom the subjects will arm themselves, as soon as they can dispatch him and shake off his yoke.

2. It is by him, and from him, they have this peace; therefore he is called our peace, Eph. ii. 14, and the peace, Mic. v. 5. Christ is the procurer and purchaser of his people's peace. Their peace was bought not stolen nor usurped, bought by his own blood. No peace could have been to men, had he not stooped and received the blow of the sword of justice. He denied himself to peace, that we might enjoy it. He is the maker of the peace, being the great peace-maker, and the Mediator of the covenant betwixt God and man, which is a covenant of peace. Peace on earth was sung at his birth; and when he is formed in a soul, peace is made betwixt God and that soul; and by his Spirit, peace is created in the soul.

He is the maintainer of the peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in

thee." So much guilt is found in the best, that they could not keep their peace a moment, were there not a continuance of it by the prince of peace. But by the continuance of his intercession, and efficacy of his Spirit, he maintains it.

He is the restorer of their peace. "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. Sometimes this peace is beat down very low by the corruption of the hearts of his people, and the malice of the devil. But he brings it up again, and the howling wilderness is as the fruitful field. Thus it comes to pass that at evening time it shall be light.

He is the perfecter of their peace. Their peace is but a twilight peace, while here, Zech. xiv. 6, 7; but he that hath begun it, will not leave it off, till he have perfected it. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth them, and God himself will wipe away all tears from their eyes. As he left not his people till he had seated them in the earthly Jerusalem, the city of peace, so he will bring his people to the city of peace above.

Finally, He is the storehouse of their peace, from which they may bring their peace in the worst of times; for which reason he seems to be called our peace. As every drop of water in a cup, is refreshing to a thirsty man; so every thing in Christ, is peace to the believer. Some seek for peace by their friends, beg it or buy it from their enemies, but the believer fetched all from Christ.

IV. We are to shew what sort of peace it is, which we may have in Christ.

1. A solid peace. The peace of the wicked is not solid peace. It is rather the name than the thing. It will not abide a trial, and, like a thief, it runs away before the searchers. But the godly man's peace in Christ will abide the trial, and the more it be examined the surer it proves.

2. It is a tender peace. It is easily marred by sin. Consciousness of guilt interrupts this peace. David's heart smote him for his sin in numbering the people. It is a tender bud of heaven, that cannot endure with sin, especially sin against light. Yet,

3. It is a strong peace in respect of troubles. This peace made a holy man say, I fear nothing but sin. Many assaults are made against the soul, to take away its peace; but it will stand against tribulation, scourging, a prison and stocks, spoiling of goods, yea, death itself cannot take it away.

4. It is a governing peace. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts," says the apostle, "to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." The passions and affections of the

soul, when they would mutiny, this peace of God stills them, and guards the heart of the believer, which is sadly exposed to danger, when without this peace. But the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.

5. A lasting peace. "Peace," said Jesus, "I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid." How soon is the candle of the wicked put out, and their peace gone; but this peace is everlasting. Though it may run under ground a while, yet it breaks up again, and never sees an end, as streaming from the eternal fountain of peace. It now remains,

V. To confirm the point. Well may we have peace in Christ, though the world should be turned upside down, and all should go unto confusion; for,

1. If we look to him, we may see God reconciled to us in him, Ephes. ii. 15, 16, God testified of him, that in him he was well pleased, namely, with all that were in him. The believer beholding his wounds may say, these have procured my peace, his blood has pacified God's anger against me. What then though the world rage, God is well pleased; though the earth be covered with blackness, heaven is no more lowering. Is not this enough. Paul triumphed here, Rom. viii. 31—39. Though the world proclaim war against me, Christ proclaims God is at peace with me. Two things here, may give a man peace in the midst of trouble. 1. The preciousness, and excellency of this peace with God. What angel or man can tell the worth of it. When it was bought, it cost an infinite price. Souls under apprehensions of wrath know something of its value that it is better than ten thousand worlds. Then no thanks to the Christian, though he digest some petty losses in the world peaceably, while this jewel is in his possession. 2. The durableness of this peace. It is everlasting. Let men rage and devils too, they may take away outward peace, but this they cannot carry away. If an army were coming to burn and slay all in their way, and you were persuaded that they should destroy nothing of yours but that which is very little worth, might not you have peace; so may the Christian.

2. In Christ we see God upon our side. He is not only reconciled in him, but he is entered into covenant with us. His friends, are our friends, and our enemies are his. This made David fearless in the midst of troubles, Psal. xxiii. and cxxviii. 6. Hence the apostle bids defiance to all who could attack him, Rom. viii. 31. May we not say then, greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world. Here all the attributes of God stream

forth peace to the believer, so that he may sing that song, "Spring up O well, sing ye unto it." Enemies shall not prevail nor escape, for he is just, wise, powerful, and true. Two things here, should be observed. 1. He is a present help, Psalm xlvi. 1. Many a one perishes because help is far off. But be the believer where he will, his help is at hand. He is ever within a cry of him. Yea, he is in him, dwelling in him by his Spirit. 2. He is a powerful help. Men may be near at hand to their friends, and not be able to help them in an evil day; but nothing is too hard for him. He is also a skilful helper. Men may be both near and able, yet for want of skill may spoil the work; but he is wise in heart. The believer may peaceably leave the time, way, and manner of deliverance on him.

3. In Christ we see God in our nature; God made man; Immanuel, God with us. This is a noble subject of meditation, the wonder of angels and saints in glory; an employment which might give us peace in the midst of trouble, if it were no other way, but by driving our thoughts, and powerfully fixing our affections on this admirable object. This gave Stephen peace. But besides, when men as incarnate devils, are terrible to us, we may look on Christ, and there with comfort see God incarnate; see him through the vail of the flesh of Christ. When a wicked man is in tribulation, he is a most miserable creature. Man is terrible to him, and God is terrible to him, because he cannot behold him in a mediator. But it is not so with a believer. May he not then have peace in trouble. Again, as Christ is a man, he has a sympathy with his people, and as God he is able to help them. Yea, in all their afflictions he is afflicted well then may the believer roll all upon him.

4. Christ suffered from the world and overcame it. "I," said he, "have overcome the world." While he was in it, he had no easy life. His life was a life of tribulation, and at length they nailed him to the cross. Here the believer may find peace. May it not create peace, amidst tribulation in the world, to think that the way of tribulation in the world, was the way by which Christ went through it to his glory. Shall we not follow him courageously and contentedly. Did they treat the master so, and will not the servant be content with his master's entertainmet. Will we follow him grudgingly, who went through so cheerfully. Again, may it not give peace, to think that he suffered to redeem us from the wrath of God. Truly, this will make the gracious soul joyful, to have but an occasion of bearing the wrath of the world for his sake and cause. It must be comfortable, also, to think that the bitter dregs are taken out of the cup. Afflictions and death are unstinged. There is no poison in the cup, this may well make you quietly drink

it. Your Master bids you ride no ford, but what he went through before you. If the world mock and reproach you, so did it do to him; if it put you to death itself, as traitors and rebels, so did it do to him.

5. The believer may have peace in Christ, in the midst of outward trouble, because he guides all himself, Is. lii. 7. The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad. Christ has fought through his enemies, and has reached the throne. He sways the mediatory sceptre for the good of the church. Many things here, speak peace to those that are in him, in the worst of times; for Christ as a king is engaged to protect his church and people, Ephes. i. 22. His subjects are the Father's gift to him, of which he is to make account, John xvii. 12. He is their shepherd, Psalm xxiii. 1. Enemies can never be able to make him a king without subjects, a head without a body. The bush burning not consumed, why? God is in the midst of it. He wants neither wisdom, will, nor power to help his people.

Whatsoever they meet with, comes from him. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. The most bitter cross comes through his hands to them. God sent Joseph to Egypt. Assyria is but God's rod and axe. Why should believers fear, when Christ lets blood of them. Though he borrow the lance from the enemy, yet it is in a friend's hand. It shall not go one hair-breadth deeper than he sees necessary.

He overrules enemies. He has a bridle on their jaws, and the remainder of their wrath he will restrain. He has a negative vote on them. "Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" The devil cannot enter swine, without his permission. They cannot put one drop more into his people's cup than he allows, Rev. ii. 10. Hence, when enemies are consulting the ruin of his church, God is said to laugh, Psal. ii. He makes the devil's servants run his errands. The Philistines' kine bring home the ark. Joseph must be exalted. His envious brethren must post him on to it. The gospel must go through the world, and therefore persecutors must scatter the preachers. Many a time the church rises, just when enemies are laying on the gravestone, as it was when the service dook was pressed upon us. Jesus must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Behold the assurance of it, Psalm cx. 1. Never weapon prospered against his people. The day will come, they shall all stand on the field as conquerors, and share of his throne.

In him they have divine promises suited to any case in which they can be. These are the silken cords let down from heaven, by which the believer may well venture to be drawn through a sea of blood, 2

Peter i. 4, Psalm cxix. 49. The word of a general will animate soldiers, and Christ's promise may well animate his people. What are you afraid of? Is it of your own weakness, which may make you sin and yield to the temptation, that may make you shrink, and leap back from the cross. Mind his promise, Isaiah xl. 30, 31; 2 Cor. xii. 9. Are you afraid of the apostacy? Truly they who are built on the sand shall fall, but not those who are built on a rock, Matth. xxi. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 18, 19. Will a man who can prevent it, suffer a limb to be drawn from him, though it be very weak? No, surely; John x. 27—29. Are you afraid of his forsaking you? Fear it not; Heb. xiii. 5; Isaiah xliii. 2. Is he with you, then he shall be with you. Mark David's reasoning, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and staff they comfort me. Why did he take thee by the hand, if he thought ever to forsake thee on any emergency. He knew all your faults from eternity. Do you fear that he intends evil to you. Perhaps you think that it is your untenderness, barrenness, or the like, that is like to raise the storm. God will have your sin to find you out. Be it so; yet consider that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. In the evening it shall be light. Let the web of Providence be once woven out, and though there be many black threads in it, it shall appear a goodly mixture.

In him we may have whatever is necessary for throughbearing in an evil day. He is able and willing to bear our expences, why then should we be disturbed at the sight of the journey. There is light to be had in him. He is the light of the world. No case so perplexed, but he can resolve it, Micah vii. 7—9. He is the counsellor, one whose advice is ready in time of need. There is strength in him. He is the storehouse of the Christian's strength, open at all times, but especially in time of trouble, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. He is the friend best known in adversity.

Lastly, Consider the Scriptures hold out Christ as one in whom peace is to be enjoyed, and that is confirmed by the experience of the saints. He is the Saviour both for temporal and eternal salvation. The ark was a type of Christ, the sanctuary, the cities of refuge, Isa. viii. 14; Heb. vi. 18; Isa. xxxii. 2. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous flee unto it and are safe. He is the peace; they that are in him dwell in peace, Mic. v. 5; Psal. vi. 2—4. He has chambers of protection for his own, into which he invites them to enter, Isa. xxvi. 20; Psal. xxvii. 5.

Use 1. Of information.

1. Here see the superlative excellence of Jesus Christ. To recom-

mend him to your souls, may we not say, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord?" and conclude, that all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to him. Such days may come, as that we can have no peace in the world. Our means may fail us, our own wisdom can find no outgate, no comfort in friends and relations; nay, but in the worst of times, in Christ we may have peace.

2. See here Christ's all-sufficiency. If we may have peace in him when we can have it no where else, then he can be to us instead of all, better than all, and is commensurable to the desires of the soul. Nothing can be wanting in him, in whom alone the soul may rejoice when striped naked of all comforts.

3. The mystery of a Christian's life in tribulation. Many have taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods; have gone to death as to their marriage. What! were they stupied, and without natural affection? No, they had peace in him. They had meat to eat, which the world knew not of.

4. The best furniture for an evil day is faith in Christ, uniting us to him. Would you know how to be safe, prepare an ark; flee to the Lord Jesus, and then you may defy the world, devil, death and hell.

Use 2. Of exhortation.

1. To you that are out of Christ. O come to Christ, that in him you may have peace in a time of trouble. Here is a sanctuary opened to you. Consider,

1. While you are out of Christ, tribulation may turn you out of a profession too, as it did the stony ground hearers; and dreadful is the case of apostates, they pierce themselves through with many sorrows. Tribulation will discover your naughtiness, John xv. 2—6.

2. Turn you what way you will, the Lord will wind a yoke of tribulation about your neck. When national judgments come, you must lay your account with a share of them, Matth. iii. 10; Amos ix. 9, 10. Your trouble will be very heavy, because the curse of God will be in it, and because you will get it all to bear. The Lord is not with you, you are alone as Saul was. O it is sad to have darkness covering both the face of the earth and heavens. Death is coming, and then the Lord shall trouble you. Your false peace will then be at an end. No peace with God, but through Christ.

2. To the godly that are in Christ, we would say, labour ye to be in such a frame, as that you may have the actual enjoyment of that peace which you may have in Christ in tribulation. That you may attain it, take these advices,

1. Labour to get a sight of your interest in Christ. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. This makes a man bold as a lion, 2 Tim. i. 12. This carried the martyrs through death; they knew in whom they had believed. This inflames love, which is of mighty influence to carry persons through tribulation. To a person in trouble, and under doubts, it is like the ship which carried Paul and his companions, when it stuck fast, and remained immoveable. This is a spring of joy, and will make the soul abhor sinful capitulations for deliverance.

2. Labour to get yourselves wrapt up in a promise for a time of tribulation, Gen. xxxii. 12. When the waters of trouble are coming on, he is a wise man who cleaves to a branch of the tree of life. A promise has been meet and drink, and all to a Christian; even a song to them in distress. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

3. Acquaint yourselves well with the Scriptures. "Unless," says David, "Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." The Scriptures are written for this end, for our learning: that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. A good Scripurist, a good Christian in an evil day: only you must study to experience the power of them on your hearts.

4. Let there be no standing controversy betwixt God and you. If you regard iniquity in your heart, the Lord will not hear you. A guilty conscience in an evil day, is a sad companion, as it was with Joseph's brethren. It puts a sting in the outward trouble. Therefore renew your repentance, and mourn over your backslidings, and apply to the blood of Jesus.

5. Study the practice of mortification. Labour to be mortified to your wordly goods, Jer. xlv. 5. The poor man must have grace to be mortified to his cottage, as well as the rich to their mansions. You must also labour to be mortified to your ease, Heb. xi. 25. It were not unreasonable for people at such a time, to ask themselves how they could take with Jacob's bed, Gen. xxviii. 11. Micaiah's food, 1 Kings xxii. 27. Peter's attendants, John xxi. 18; and the three children's lodging, Dan. iii. You must be mortified to your life, Luke xiv. 26. Die to your life now, if you would have that peace. Be familiar with Job's acquaintance, Job xvii. 14. Amen.

Exercise and Addition, February 28, 1712.

ANGER NOT TO BE SINFULLY INDULGED.

SERMON XXXIII.

EPHESIANS iv. 26, 27,

Be angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil

THE apostle is now on some particulars of the old man that is to be put off, and of the new man which is to be put on. In the former verse he dehorts them lying, and exhorts to the speaking of truth. In the text, he lays before us our duty with respect to anger. We may take up the words in three parts: 1. We have the passion kept within its due bounds. Commended say some: allowed or permitted rather, say others. "Be angry." 2. The inordinate passion simply condemned in its beginnings, as well as in its progress, "sin not;" namely, in your passion. It is condemned particularly in its progress and continuance. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." 3. The reason why the inordinate passion is condemned: it is a giving place to the devil.

The first thing laid before us in the text is, anger kept within its due bounds: "Be angry, and sin not." Some will have these words token out of Psal. iv. 4, which we render, "stand in awe." The Hebrew word, some translate simply, *be moved.* It signifies to be moved, either with anger or fear. The septuagint reads it, *be angry*, &c. Thus our English *rage*, answers it both in sound and sense; and accordingly our translators render the same word *rage*, Prov. xxix. 9; Dan. iii. 13. Yet, on the other hand, it cannot be denied, but it signifies also to be moved with fear, Isa. xxxii. 11, "be troubled," &c.; Deut. xxviii. 63, "a trembling heart." But if you consider the scope of both places, they seem to be very different. The Psalmist proposeth that, "stand in awe," or "be moved," as a check to his enemies sinning in persecuting the godly man, whom God has set apart for himself. The apostle proposeth his "sin not," as a check on the passion of anger in ourselves, that it go not out of order. Therefore, I suppose, that if the apostle has any eye in this, to that of the Psalmist, it is not by way of citation, but at most an allusion.

I see little reason why these words should be taken rather as a concession or permission, than a command. It is nowise like that,

Gen. ii. 16. It is not left to our option, whether to be angry or not, when there is a just cause. Coldness in God's matters, is hateful stupidity. The passions in the soul, are as winds in the air. If the winds blow not at all, or too calmly, they leave the ship at a great disadvantage; though it is sad when they blow so violent as to dash her upon the rocks. And what though anger in itself is neither good nor evil? The same may be said of love and other passions which are not in themselves evil, as envy is; yet doubtless it is a command, "Love as brethren." The apostle here, is directing us in practice, not what to think of anger in the abstract; which is never found in a subject, but vested with its due circumstances, and then it is either holy, good and just; or else it is irregular and impious. Thus the meaning must be, be holily angry, but not sinfully.

As for what is merely natural in anger, depending upon the body only, we leave it to philosophers to explain it. As for what concerns the soul and conscience in it, I take anger to be a commotion of the spirit, with hatred of, and grief for an injury, and desire of revenge; or to express it more softly, a desire of the vindication of the injured party. Every one may consult his own breast, and find it so. I shall consider this as in holy anger. And there is in it,

1. A commotion of the spirit, which ariseth from the apprehension of a real injury; for if it be only imaginary it is sinful. This is necessary to stir up a man's desire to see the wrong rectified. All commotion of a man's spirit is not sinful. Whoever feels this holy anger in him, will find it answers the name, an anger, vexation, or trouble of spirit. As Lot, whose soul in his anger against the sins of the Sodomites, "was vexed with their filthy conversation." So did Paul encounter the stoics at Athens, not with stupid apathy, but "a spirit stirred in him," Acts xvii. 16. Cast into a holy paroxysm, as the word signifies. Yea, our Lord himself, vented this in his angry looks: "He looked round about him with *anger*, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts," Mark iii. 5. Nay, behold the holy height of it in the Holy One, when he said to them that sold doves in the temple, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." It was good Eli's want of this zeal, which was the ruin, first of his sons, and then of himself, 1 Sam. iii. 13. He restrained them not, (Hebrew). Did not thraw his brows, or gloom upon them. Old age, it is like, had wrinkled them; but he had not as much zeal as to wrinkle them in holy anger against sin, and so he restrained them not.

2. There is hatred in it, not at the persons but at their sins,

whether they be our own sins or others. In this respect it is called *indignation*, 2 Cor. vii. 11. This is most desirable, when it is kept purely on this object. That is not the part where we are in hazard of excess, seeing we are commanded to abhor that which is evil, as we would do hell itself.

3. There is grief in it, Mark iii. 5. This naturally follows on hatred of the thing, which likewise ariseth from a just apprehension of the evil of it in a gracious soul. And from both ariseth,

4. A desire of the vindication of the right and honour of the party injured. This is that which the word Οργιζεσθε, used in the text, most properly points at, being derived from οργη, which they say is from ορεγομαι, to desire. The vindication of the right and honour of the party injured, is that which naturally occurs as the object of this desire in anger. Now where that cannot be done but by punishment or revenge, there is an holy anger, an appetite after revenge, which in its due circumstances is a good thing, being an execution of justice, Rom. xii. 19. But seeing God has not appointed all to be ministers of justice, holy anger will not carry the man without his sphere, and therefore it is still but an appetite of revenge by the hand that has right, and power to inflict it, and not of that carnal revenge which may satisfy an exorbitant passion, but that which is in a way of justice necessary to vindicate the right and honour of the injured. But where the party angry has power to revenge all disobedience, this holy anger sets him on the work; as it was with Moses, Exod. xxxii. 19—29, and Phinehas slaying Zimri and Cosbi, and Jesus driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple. But seeing there are not a few cases in which holy anger is very necessary, and yet the humiliation of the party, or confession of the fault may salve the honour of the injured, and a soft answer may turn away wrath; in holy anger that desire will not proceed farther, and therefore I called it, in the general, only a desire of the vindication of the right and honour of the injured, and not simply a desire of revenge.

This we may discribe holy anger to be a commotion of the spirit, arising from the apprehension of a real sinful evil, with hatred of it, grief for it, and a regular desire of the vindication of the right and honour of the injured, for the destruction of sin. Thus much for holy anger. I proceed to the

Second thing, which is sinful anger condemned. And,

I. We are to consider it in its rise, and the passion transgressing due bounds, which makes it sinful, however short, while it lasts.

Sin not, says the apostle. There is no door opened for sin in any case, but the particular here aimed at, is that we sin not in our

anger; that a fire from hell rise not in our breasts, instead of a fire from heaven. We must not suppose that these words import a power in man, by any grace given in this life, to order his anger in any case, so as to be sinless in the eye of the law. The most pure fire that ever burnt in the heart of any man but the man Christ, wanted not its smoke. But though the law of God is not the measure of our strength, yet it is the rule of our duty, and whatsoever in any case goes beyond the bounds of it is sin. It aims not at the extirpation of the passion of anger out of our hearts, but says unto it hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be staid. But if the passion break over the bars, and be as the letting out of waters, be in whom it will, the text shews them their transgression that they have exceeded; even meek Moses in his holy anger, breaks the tables. Though the defects in holy anger may be here condemned, yet sinful anger seems to be that which the apostle calls παροργισμος, and we render wrath, whereby he shews what he meant by his saying, sin not. He says not, let not the sun go down επι τηοργη, on your anger, but επι τη παροργισμω, upon your wrath; your unjust and sinful anger, which exceeds the due bounds of anger, as the preposition in the word imports. Now for clearing of what this sinful anger is, we must consider the due boundary of holy and just anger, and what is beyond these is sinful.

1. The grounds of holy anger are just and weighty, such as God's dishonour by our own sins, and the sins of others 2 Cor. vii. 11, Exod. xxii. 9. It must then be sinful anger, when it is without a just ground. "Whosoever," says our Lord, "is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment." Without a cause, εικη, that is rashly, without any cause at all, or vainly, upon a light or trival cause, which is indeed no just cause of anger. But the judgment is weak and yielding, and gives way to the passions: in both senses we are said to take God's name in vain.

2. The degree of holy anger is proportioned to the fault.. Thus God himself is angry at all sins, yet there are some sins to which he reserves the fierceness of wrath. When the anger then in respect of degrees, exceeds the measure of the offence, and men are carried so far beside themselves, as to turn about the cart wheel on the cummin that might be beat out with the rod, then it is sinful anger; and therefore good Jacob, when a-dying, curses the wrath of the brethren of iniquity, against the Shechemites because it was cruel, destroying a whole city for one's fault. Such was David's anger against Nabal, 1 Sam. xxv., to execute, which, though he had vowed himself by vow, yet when he comes to himself he breaks, and blesses God for preventing him.

3. The end of holy anger which it is directed, is the glory of God and the good of our neighbour, Prov. xiii. 24; John ii. 16, 17. Sinful then it must be, when it is a fire lighting on others, to make them sacrifices to cursed self, to satisfy the desires of a proud (Hebrew, a wide heart, Prov. xxvii. 25.) which will never think it gets enough from others. "Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath."

4. The effects of holy anger directly and indirectly, are just and good, for the man has rule over his own spirit, and no holy affection is inconsistent with another. It fits him for his duty to God and men, as may be seen in the case of Moses praying for the people, Exod. xxxii. The anger then must be sinful when its effects are hellish, as when it breaks out in clamour and evil speaking, Eph iv. 31. Even meek Moses fell into a fit of this sinful anger, "Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips." The anger is sinful also, when it leaves a man no more master of himself, and unfits him for duty, 1 Tim. ii. 8.

Hence it appears there is a twofold sinful anger: 1. There is an anger, which is originally, and in itself sinful; that, where there is no just ground at all to be angry, to which men's weakness of judgment and strength of passion often expose them. Such was Jonah's anger, at the withering of the gourd. This anger is like a river which hath quite left its proper channel, and so cannot but be very pernicious. 2. There is an anger accidentally sinful, where there is indeed just ground to be angry, but by reason of the corruption of men, is carried beyond the proper bounds. As a river which indeed still covers the ordinary channel, but so swells as to overflow all its banks. Such was David's anger against Nabal, 1 Sam. xxv. 21, 22. Each of these is a προοργισμος, a sinful anger, of which we must beware. But what if it arise in us, as it may in the best? Why then the flame must be quickly quenched, which is the second thing to be considered anent sinful anger. The progress and continuance of it is condemned. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. There seems to be some emphasis in that your wrath; it points at the wrath of man, that worketh not the righteousness of God. It is that wrath of which Satan is father, and our own corrupt heart the mother. A hellish offspring that should be stifled in the birth, or be taken as soon as possible and dashed against the stones, and not be allowed to live till the sun go down. It is strange fire not brought from the altar, but from the common hearth of a proud corrupt heart, and must be quenched speedily. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath; which is not to be understood as if it might lawfully be kept up till the sun go

down for what is sinful in its rise, must still be more so in its continuance. But it is a proverbial speech, the import of which we may take up in these two things: 1. As the sun with his scorching heat hasteth to go down, so should we, whose passion sooner by far comes to its height than the sun, make haste to lay it aside. 2. As the sun going down brings on the night, which calls men to set themselves to the putting off their clothes, and going to rest; so should we set ourselves to put off the old man, and by all means to put off anger with our clothes, that we take it not into the bed with us, where it is most dangerous. For, whereas as the light affords variety of objects to us, and so is a friend to the diverting of wrath, the darkness of the night keeps these out of our sight, and so leaves the very spirit to feed on that chiefly which first raised it, and so it gets leave to range through the several methods of revenge; and so it is said of the wicked "that he deviseth mischief upon his bed." This I take to be the main thing aimed at in the expression.

Lastly, We shall consider the reason. "Neither give place to the devil." That is, and give not place to the devil. It is a general precept, but is here particularly aimed at, the matter of sinful anger. Some read it, to the calumniator; thereby understanding the occasion given to the wicked to reproach piety, because of the sinful passions of professors, and the effects thereof. This is a sad truth indeed, but we take it rather as our translation reads it, to the devil; who must needs have a particular love to sinful anger: it is so like hell, wherein men are on fire with a scorching heat, but in gross darkness. It refers, 1. To the rise of sinful anger. To give place to it, is to admit the devil. He will strive to have place, and so tempt us to it; but our yielding to the temptation is to give him place. 2. It refers to the progress and continuance of it. The more it is harboured, the devil is the farther admitted. He loves to fish in muddy water. When he has got the fire kindled, he employs his bellows to blow it up, and always to make the flame greater and greater, to the destruction of ourselves and others.

Doctrine I. Men not only may, but ought to be angry where there is just ground for it. We know no just ground for anger, but the things which are sinful. As for the injuries done to us, or our fellow creatures, they are not real injuries, if they be not sins against the Lord; for no man can break in upon the second table, but he must break through the first.

Reasons. 1. Because in that case, the love and respect which we owe to God, who is dishonoured, require it.

2. The love which we owe to ourselves or others who are injured, requires it. For in that case, it is as it were said, who is on the Lord's side, and on the side of souls that are in hazard.

Use I. Let us then be filled with holy indignation against ourselves, because of the sins of our nature, hearts, lips, and lives.

2. At the dishonour done to God by others. Alas! we are very quickly set in a flame, if but a word seem to reflect on us; but how cold are we in matters that dishonour God. O! that we could spend these arrows, firebrands, and darts, of which we are otherwise liberal enough on our own and others sins.

Doctrine II. Men should beware that the fire of sinful anger kindle not in their breasts.

Reasons. 1. Because it is evil in itself, and dishonourable to God; being the vomit of a proud heart and an unmeekened spirit.

2. Because it is not only evil, but a mother of evil; and is not only an inlet to many mischiefs to ourselves and others, but drives men to them to act with vigour. An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man abounded in transgression.

Use. Guard against sinful anger; against being angry without just cause. Let judgment always lead the way to your passion. He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit, exalteth folly. Exalts, hangs up a sign of folly at his own door, that every one may know that a fool dwells within. Again, when you are angry on good grounds, be on your guard lest your anger degenerate into a sinful passion. We may be easily carried too far, and when the furnace of the heart is hot, if we take not heed, it may soon come to that to scorch and burn up ourselves and others too, instead of consuming their, or our own evils. Self is most ready to creep in, and justle out all respect to the honour of God, and have sad effects. Even in anger upon a just cause, we are like man standing on the edge of a steep rock, the ground is firm, but the head is ready to grow giddy, and he to fall headlong.

Consider the evil of sinful anger. 1. It is a degree of murder. "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment." It is a sword that stabs two at once, the angry man and the party against whom he is angry. 2. It is a fit of madness, in which a man hath no rule over his own spirit, till he come to himself, for he goes out of himself in anger. 3. It makes a man most unlike Christ, who was meek and lowly. 4. It has most bitter effects. It mars our access to God in prayer; makes us most unmeet for divine communications, as the troubled water cannot receive the image of the sun. It exposes us to Satan, as a city that is

broken down and without walls, to the enemy; and makes men intolerable to others, if they be not all the more masters of patience.

Doctrine III. If sinful anger do enter our breasts, we must endeavour to extinguish it quickly, and beware of nourishing it.

It reproves those, who when once that devil is raised in them, can hardly be got laid again; men of an implacable temper, whose anger is like fire in iron or other solid matter, long ere it be laid aside. If once it get unto them, it must go to bed and rise with them too. Yea, many who will not only let the sun go down on their wrath, but keep it up weeks, months, and years. Once do them an injury, they will never forget nor forgive. Be not then hasty in thy spirit to be angry, for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

Let us learn then, to quench this spark quickly, when it falls on us. This may be enforced from

Doctrine IV. That the admitting and lodging of sinful anger in our hearts, is a giving place to the devil. For remedies,

1. Let us consider our own vileness and unworthiness, and how often we are provoking the Lord, and so turn our anger against ourselves. "For we ourselves also, were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived; serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy; hateful, and hating one another.

2. Let us consider these things with which we are so ready to be hurried away, are the trials of our patience, and we are on our trial for heaven.

3. Let us propose to ourselves the example of the meek and lowly Jesus. "He suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps."

Lastly, Out of a sense of our utter inability to resist the least temptation, look to Jesus for strength, and by faith draw strength from him. When the temptation is like to catch us, let us lay hold of the promise, and of Christ in the promise. Without this, nothing will avail, acceptably to prevent or suppress it; and this is the reason, why sometimes Christians bear great affronts and injuries better than small ones. For in the latter, they trust to themselves; in the former to Christ. No wonder all goes to wreck, when men instead of the golden shield of faith made by the true Solomon, they like fools think to do with the brazen ones of their own stock. Amen.

Ettrick, July, 13, 1707.

CHRIST THE PHYSICIAN OF SOULS.

SERMON XXXIV.

MATTHEW ix. 12,

They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

IN the ninth verse we have an account of Matthew's conversion, upon which he invites Christ to his house, and entertains him. Matthew was a publican, a collector of custom, it seems by Mark's account, chap. ii. at Capernaum custom-house, on the sea side, who gathered custom of passengers over the water, and of those whose employment lay in the sea of Galilee. Christ's going into his house, encouraged others of his fellow officers to converse with Christ, who very readily admitted them, ver. 10. This offended the Pharisees, and they quarrel his disciples for it, ver. 11. Old hypocrites are often great enemies to young converts. But Christ defends his own conduct, by the reason in the text, namely, it is not the fault, but the duty of the physician to be with the sick. As if he had said, I am the physician, they are the sick, therefore it is my duty to be with them. We may take up the text in these two propositions:

1. They that be whole need not a physician; a physician's work is to cure diseases, but they that have no diseases have no need of him, with such he has nothing to do. This refutes the error of the Socinians, who hold that Christ would have come, though man had not sinned. But withal, he doth here tacitly upbraid the Pharisees with their self conceit, looking on themselves as whole and so standing in no need of him.

2. The sick need the physician. He takes it for granted, that because they were sinners, they were spiritually sick; he owns himself to be the spiritual physician, and therefore concludes that they stood in need of him. Where should the physician be, but among the sick, with them only is his employment.

DOCTRINE I. Sin is the sickness of the soul. It is the disease of the soul, that makes the sinner a sick man.

Here I shall *first* confirm the point; *secondly*, shew what it is in sin that sickens the soul; and *thirdly*, consider the properties of this sickness.

I. I am to confirm the point, that sin is the sickness of the soul. The soul may be sick as well as the body, though many feel the one without the other.

1. This is clear from the repeated testimony of the Scriptures. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." We find God by Ezekiel complaining of the spiritual shepherds of Israel, "that they had not strengthened the diseased, nor healed that which was sick, nor bound up that which was broken." We read also of the plague of the heart. The same thing is imported in Christ being a healer, Mal. iv. 2; Hos. xiv. 4, and from its being said, that by his stripes we are healed. Compare Isa. liii. 4, with Matth. viii. 17, and 1 Pet. ii. 24.

2. As bodily diseases affect the body, so does sin affect the soul. This is clear, if we consider these particulars: 1. Sickness brings pain and torment with it to the body, so does sin to the soul. Indeed many do not feel the pain of sin now; but as men under some disorders think themselves well enough, so do they, till once they are awakened to a sense of their danger, Luke xv. 17; Acts ii. 37. Cain's sin was pleasant perhaps, when he was satisfying the lust of revenge, but afterwards the sweet morsel became very bitter. Felix's sin brought a fit of trembling upon him, Acts xxiv. 25. David's sin cost him broken bones. In every temptation there is a hook to pierce the soul, as well as a bait to satisfy its lust. It makes an intolerable wound. "A wounded spirit who can bear." Again, sickness unfits a man for his work; he has neither heart nor hand for it. In like manner, sin takes both inclination and ability from the sinner, for the great work he has to do. According to the degree of sickness, so will it be in this point. The soul under the power of sin, where the violence of the disease is not broken by converting grace, is as Ephraim, "a silly dove without heart," as to any thing that is truly good, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The sinner is altogether without strength. He neither will nor can do. Where the disease is beginning to go away, there is still some remains of these, of heartlessness and weakness.

Farther, Sickness takes away the beauty of the body, Psal. xxxix. 11. Sin also spoils the beauty of the soul. The beauty of the soul consists in its likeness to God; sin makes men like the devil. Grace is the greatest ornament, and sin the greatest deformity of the soul. It makes men vile and filthy in the eyes of the Lord, Psal. xiv. 3, and also in the eyes of good men, Psal. xv. 4; hence the godly are self-loathers, because they see it in themselves. Once more, sickness tends to death. Diseases are death's cords, which

it sends before it, to bind the prisoner. Sin tends to spiritual and eternal death, and will certainly bring it on, if it be not cured, "for the wages of sin is death." There is a connection betwixt sin and death, which none but Jesus can dissolve. "All they who hate me," says he, "love death." The sinner is busy platting cords to bind himself.

II. We are to shew what it is in sin that sickens the soul.

1. The guilt of it, that is, the obligation to punishment. In this respect, sin is the sting of death. Nothing wounds the soul more than felt guilt. It brings a sickness that cannot be removed, till iniquity be forgiven. A guilty conscience is the mother of fears, and a perpetual tormentor. This affected Cain and Judas most dreadfully.

2. The stain of it. Sin brings a blot with it, that defiles the soul. Hence it is called an uncleanness, that makes a sinner unmeet for communion with a holy God. It defiles the whole man, and makes him unto every good work reprobate. This makes it a loathsome disease, and this can only be taken away "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

3. The reigning power of it. Sin in the unregenerate, keeps its throne in their hearts. It commands, and they obey. They are in this snare of the devil, and are taken captive by him at his will. This keeps the soul in continual disorder.

Lastly, The indwelling power of it, which it hath even in the regenerate. This makes them groan as Paul did, Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." We are now,

III. To consider the properties of this sickness.

1. It is a spiritual sickness. They are the most dangerous diseases that effect the vital parts. Sin affects the soul. If a leg or an arm be diseased and cannot be cured, it may be cut off, and the life be saved; but if the heart be sick unless there be a cure, the man dies. The soul is the most precious part, and sin chiefly affects it. Though some sins be committed by the body, yet the guilt and stain of them reach the soul.

2. It is an universal sickness, spreading itself through the whole man. All the faculties of the soul are injured and disordered by it. It darkens the mind, wounds the conscience, pollutes the heart, disorders the affections and weakens the memory for good.

3. It is an infectious sickness. Jude speaks of hating "even the garment spotted by the flesh." He says this in allusion to the uncleanness under the law, got by touching an unclean garment. Evil example does much hurt. Sin is therefore compared to leaven. O!

how cautious will people be of infectious bodily diseases, that they come not near the sick; but alas! they are not so, with respect to the more dangerous infection of sin.

4. It is a hereditary sickness. It is natural to us, we are born with it, and therefore cannot be cured by all the art of man. "We were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mothers conceive us." "Since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." Our first father fell, and we in him received such a bruise, as nothing but the divine power of Christ can heal.

5. It is a growing sickness. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Some deseases will abate, though no remedy be applied; but this, the longer it lasts, the stronger it grows. Sin is never satisfied, but the more that is given to it, the more it craves.

Lastly, It is a mortal disease. Sinner, there is death in the pot. "It will bite like a serpent and sting like an adder." Either it or thou must die. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." It is true all die not of this disease; but though it is not mortal in the event to all, yet it is mortal in its nature.

Use 1. Of information. This lets us see,

1. Why, though our time goes on, yet the work of our salvation stands. Souls are sick, and cannot exert themselves to work. The sick man keeps his bed, when others are busy about their work. Alas! a spirit of reigning sloth has seized on the greatest part of us. The "sluggard hath put his hand into his bosom, and it grieves him to bring it to his mouth again."

2. Why so many have so little desire after the word of the Lord. It is no wonder the sick man want an appetite. It is common to sick persons to loathe their food, to be nice and ready to find fault with it, and always to be desiring changes. Alas! this is the manner in which many entertain the word of God.

3. They are surely fools, who make a mock of sin. Sickness is no matter of sport. There are two sorts of these fools. Some that make a mock of their own sins. These are the madmen that glory in their chains, which are the badges of their folly. That is matter of mirth to themselves, which makes others pity them. The second sort are those, who make a mock of the sins of others. They not only sin themselves, but have pleasure in them that commit sins. Dreadful folly to rejoice in what grieves the Spirit of the Lord, and wounds the souls of the guilty. This makes men very like the devil.

4. The cruelty of those who tempt others to sin, Hab. ii. 15. The devil has his agents in the world, who are not content to go to ruin

themselves, but exert themselves to ruin others also. "They are of their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning." O! but it is a dreadful thing to be guilty of the blood of the souls of others. This will make hell the hotter, Luke xvi. 27, 28.

5. To be insensible of sin, is a most pitiful case. What a misery is it to be sleeping the sleep of death, to be pining away in our iniquities, and yet insensible of our danger. It is the case of many, as of the Laodiceans, Rev. iii. 17. The case of such is most desperate, and of all persons they are the farthest from the cure, not having come to the first step of it.

Lastly, No wonder that they go mourning, and with a bowed down back, that are sensible of their sin. Alas! it is much to be regretted, that there are so few in our day that are troubled about sin. But it is also lamentable, that men should be ready to traduce soul-exercise as melancholy. Many have their own consciences seared, and so they think that others should be so too, and think as little of sin as they do.

USE 2. Of exhortation. Is sin the sickness of the soul. Then,

1. Let this disengage your hearts from sin. Hate it; shun all occasions of it, and temptations to it. Shall a man carry fire in his bosom, and not be burned? There is an evil in sin which, if seen, would make it very odious. It is a poisonous cup; if you drink it, your soul is in hazard of eternal death; and all the pleasure you can have in it, is too dear bought, at the rate of eternal pain.

2. Go quickly to the Physician, for the cure of the disease of the soul, which you labour under. Delay no longer.

1. Time is flying, Job ix. 25, 26; and when gone, cannot be recalled. That which was, will be no more. Yesterday has taken its eternal farewell. The candle burnt to snuff, will not light again. No medicine will cure that wound, no argument will persuade it to return; crowns and kingdoms will not buy it back again. Time past is out of your power, the time to come is not in your hand, your only time is the present.

2. Death is approaching, and there can be no returning from it to mend matters, Job xiv. 14. No place for cure there, Eccl. ix. 10. If the infant come into the world dead, all the world cannot put life into it; and if death take us away out of the world, under the power of that sickness, there is no cure for it hereafter.

3. Make frequent application to Christ. We get many wounds and are frequently defiling ourselves, we had need therefore, to be often dipping in the fountain. Such people as can take little food at once, had need to take it frequently. Alas! the few addresses

which we make to the throne of grace, look like as we thought ourselves whole, little needing the Physician.

DOCTRINE II. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the great Physician of souls, ready to cure them of their spiritual diseases.

The brazen serpent was a type of Christ, and he is held forth under the notion of the tree of life. He is the great Physician of souls. Here I shall,

I. Shew in what way Christ cures sin-sick souls.

II. That our Lord cures all those that come to him.

III. That our Lord Jesus Christ is ready to cure sinners of their spiritual maladies. We are then,

I. To show in what way Christ cures sin-sick souls. Three things are to be noticed here, as concurring to the cure of the soul.

1. The blood of Christ. "This purgeth the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." It is by his death that they have life. His sufferings and wounds are the medicine for our souls, "For by his stripes we are healed." The feet were sick, and blood was drawn of the head to heal them. We contracted the debt, and Christ paid it. What physician is like this great Physician, who will buy his patient's life at the rate of the loss of his own.

2. The Spirit of Christ. "He hath the seven Spirits of God." That is, the Spirit in all his influences and operations, and he sends him to heal his people. As the blood of Christ takes away the guilt of sin in justification, so the Spirit of Christ, the purchase of his blood, takes away the stain and power of it in regeneration and sanctification. In these, the Spirit renews and purifies the soul, and thus makes it a new creature.

3. The word of Christ. "He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." So says he to his disciples, "Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you." The waters of the sanctuary are healing waters." Many a time, a word from the Lord in ordinances has been very healing to a sick soul. We proceed,

II. To shew that our Lord cures all those that come to him. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me," says he, "and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." But why does he undertake and perform the cure of their souls?

1. Because he has his Father's commission for that effect. "The Spirit of the Lord God," says he, "is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." This anointing implies his sufficiency for the work, and his call to it. His Father hath ap-

pointed him the second Adam, to cure the disease contracted by the first Adam's eating the forbidden fruit.

2. Because of his love and pity to men. He is truly the compassionate Samaritan. "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." How can such loathsome creatures as we are, ever be taken up into Christ's chariot? Why, it is paved with love. Love provided the remedy and applies it also, Eph. ii. 4, 5. Love made Jacob serve seven years, and free love engageth Christ to cure sick souls, Ezek. xvi. 9.

3. Because he hath been at vast expense to prepare the remedy and medicine for their souls, 1 Peter i. 19, and therefore he cannot but apply it. They are injurious to his wisdom, who would have him provide the remedy for them, to whom it will never be applied. It was for this very purpose that he died. He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. While he is curing sick souls, he is but pursuing the great end of his death. Either Christ falls short of the end which he proposed to himself in dying, or else he died not for all; for all are not cured and saved by him.

4. For his own glory. "This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praises," Ezek. xxxvi. 25—32. The glory of the Mediator is highly exalted by his curing sick souls. It puts the crown on Christ's head, and drowns them for ever in his debt. The glory of God is displayed in the cure of sick souls. Had the sick been left to be swallowed up of death, justice would have been exalted; but now, justice, mercy, grace, and truth, are all glorified in their salvation through Christ. We are,

III. To shew that the Lord Jesus is ready to cure sinners of their spiritual maladies. This appears if we consider,

1. That he invites sick sinners to come to him for cure, Is. lv. 1; Rev. iii. 17, 18. O! what seriousness, what earnestness is in these invitations! He uses even his authority in commanding them to obey. "Look unto me," says he, "and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ;" for such is the wickedness of our nature, that we love the disease, and will not submit to a cure, Rom. x. 3. He complains of them that will not give him employment, saying, "ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." He stands at the sick man's bedside, expostulating with him for his refusal of a cure, saying, "wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?" and lamenting over his obstinacy, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace."

2. The great end for which he came into the world, namely, "to seek and to save that which was lost." When his disciples would have him bring fire from heaven to consume his opposers, he told them, "that he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." What is this world but an hospital of sin-sick souls, who have got deadly wounds by the sting of the old serpent? Why might not the hallelujahs of angels have kept him at court, but that the shrieks of dying sinners pierced his heart, and made him take that long journey for their cure.

3. What he has done for cure of souls sick of sin. He gave himself to death, that they might live. He was content to take that load of guilt on him, which sickened their souls. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. His blood was shed for our cure.

4. That he comes on a call to deliver sick souls. "Call upon me in the day of trouble," says he, "I will deliever thee, and thou shalt glorify me," for it is meat and drink to him to do the Father's will, in saving lost and perishing sinners. If the soul once be willing to part with the disease, and to seek the physician, the cure cannot misgive.

3. Yea, he comes uncalled. "I am sought of them that asked not for me," says he, "I am found of them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." Should not the sick seek unto the physician, but here the physician seeks out the sick. "Ye have not chosen me," says he, "but I have chosen you." Thus he did with Zaccheus. And truly love begins always on Christ's side, and this fire descends before it ascend.

6. He waits long on sick souls, after many refusals of employment for him. O! when Christ offers himself to us, should he take us at our first word, we would receive no benefit by him, but he waits. "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock."

Lastly, The warm and kind entertainment he gives them that come to him. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Whatever their disease be he will not send them away.

Use 1. Of information. This teaches us, that of all men they are most inexcusable, who, under the gospel, live in their sins. The remedy was not provided for devils, and to many heathens it is not made known; but how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation. If we perish, our blood is on our own heads. Slighting of Christ is wilful self-murder. "Why then will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Use 2. For reproof. It reproves those who slight this great

Physician of souls, who will not come to him to be cured of their spiritual maladies. Now, amongst the slighters of this Physician, we reckon,

1. The Papists, who have other physicians besides Christ. What else means their invocation of saints, merit of good works, indulgences, &c.; these are put in the room of Christ and his blood, who by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and which purges from all sin. Here, after all, the device of purgatory is most cunning, for after their patients have tried all the former, yet cannot have true peace, this remains after death, which, if it be not effectual, people cannot come back to prove its falsehood.

2. These that never go out of themselves for a cure. This is natural to one and all of us. We are like the spider, that will needs spin its web out of its own bowels, and it is not little that will make the soul content to be indebted to Christ for a cure. One man rambles a while with the profane, at length he takes up himself. Another gets his conscience alarmed by a sermon, and he resolves forthwith to be a better man. Another has been under strong pangs of conscience, but he is born before the time, his wounds get a law plaster of tears, prayers, and good resolutions, and endeavours to keep the law, and he is whole. But still they live ignorant of Christ, and of the necessity of the application of his blood.

O sirs! these things will not do; you will find them all physicians of no value. These persons may easily feign themselves whole, whose wounds were never very deep, but they will break out again, if they go not to Christ.

3. To those who love the disease, so as they loathe the Physician. Their hearts are so glued to their lusts, that they cannot think of parting with them. Many are of the temper of the Gadarenes. They will say they love Christ; but yet they love their lusts also. How can that be? They dress up to themselves an idol of their own fancy, that will save their souls, and their sins too, instead of Christ, and they fall in love with it, Mal. iii. 1.—3; John vi. 15, 66. This heart love to the disease, makes many prayers to the Physician to be pure compliment; the heart refusing what the tongue seeks.

What do ye in this, but love death; greedily drink the poison, and throw away the antidote?

4. To those who will not accept of the remedies which he prescribes. Health is sweet, but yet many will rather die of their disease, than suffer a member to be cut off. Repentance is too bitter a draught for them; mortification of lusts, a pill which they cannot swallow.

5. Those that see not their need of Christ, who are whole in their own eyes. There is such a generation, that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness. They are sick of the disease of Laodicea. They fancy themselves rich, and that they stand in need of nothing. None are in a more desperate case, than those who are neither cold nor hot. Publicans and sinners will enter into the kingdom of heaven before them. There is more hope of a fool, than of one who is wise in his own conceit. These are so swollen with conceit of themselves, that they say in effect, they reign as kings without Christ.

6. Those that depend upon the mercy of God, without respect to Christ.

Lastly, Those that have no confidence in the Physician. Presumption kills many, despair kills some. There is a sullen and silent despair, which possesses the breasts of many, Jer. ii. 25. They have little or no hope of mending their case, and therefore they endeavour not to think on it, but to take as pleasant a life to themselves as they can, come after what will. There is also a raging despair, as in Judas, the punishment and end of the former, when God wraps the filthy garments of the man's sin in brimstone, and sets them on fire about him. Both these slight Christ, as if their cases were hopeless and beyond his reach.

Use 3. Of Exhortation. Come to him for the cure of your spiritual diseases.

Motive 1. Sure you have need of him, absolute need of him. O let necessity drive you to him. The less you see your need, the more need you have of him. Are there no diseased souls here? I will tell you some diseases that I fear are very common among us, but Christ will cure you of them, if you will come to him.

1. The blindness of the eyes of the mind, Eph. iv. 18. We were all born blind, and it is to be feared many of us were never yet cured. Are there not many, who never yet saw sin or holiness in their own colours. Hell is before them, they fear it not, because they see it not. Head and heart of some is all darkness. Many have an enlightened head, and a dark heart; but Christ can make even "those who are darkness, light in the Lord."

2. Spiritual dumbness. There is a dumb devil possesseth many. They have tongue enough for the world, but none for God or their souls. They have not a mouth to open for God and his cause in the world. They are dumb in their families, and in their closets, as to their souls. This is an evidence grace has not touched their hearts, or else their mouths would be opened, Isa. xxxv. 5, 6.

3. The hardness of the heart. The hearts of many are as an

adamant. Mercies will not melt them, judgments will not break them. They are proof against the preaching of law and gospel. It may be said of many, that they have made their faces harder than a rock. But they say the blood of the goat will dissolve the adamant. To such sinners Christ says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

4. The falling evil of backsliding. Many have sometimes flourished fairly in God's vineyard, who are now withered and gone back. They are far from what they were some time ago. Like the sow, they have returned to their wallowing in the mire. To them he says, "Return, ye backsliding, and I will heal your backslidings."

5. The swelling of pride and self-conceit. There is a root of pride in every man's heart by nature, and if the axe of deep humiliation has not been laid at the root of it, no wonder that it grow to a monstrous size. But our Lord can cure it, Acts ix. 6. He can lead the man to the knowledge of the evils of his heart.

Lastly, The decay of grace. Alas! this is too visible at this day, in the lives of many; they do not equal the advantages which they enjoy. But Christ cures this also. "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

Motive 2. Our Lord Jesus has all the properties that recommend a physician.

He is skilful. He can take up your case, though you cannot make language of it. He knows what will suit your disease. Many a time we think that good for us, which he denies; but afterwards, we see it is good to be at his disposal. He is successful. Some diseases are the reproach of medicine, they cannot be cured; but none can baffle him. "Though," says he, "your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool."

He cures freely, Isa. lv. 1, "I will heal your backsliding, and love you freely." Other physicians are enriched by their patients, but he enricheth his, making them heirs of glory.

Lastly, He is the only physician. Either you must die, or come to him. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Use 4. Of trial. By this we may know whether we have come to Christ or not. Has he been a physician to your soul. If you have

come to him, the cure is begun on thee. The following are marks of a soul, in which Christ has begun the cure:

1. That soul will highly prize the physician. "Unto them that believe, he is precious." As nothing is sweeter than life, so none will be so dear to that soul, as the restorer of its health, and deliverer from death, Psal. lxxiii. 25. None will prize Christ but those that have seen the evil of sin. Some obtain a partial sight of their disease; hence partial affections to Christ, a kind of hankering after him. Christ is sweet, but still some lust is sweeter; but the cured soul gets an overpowering sight of him, Matth. xiii. 45, 46.

2. That soul will loath its disease above all things. "They that love the Lord hate evil." Sin is made bitter to the soul, when it is among the Physician's hands: they groan under it, as the Israelites did in Egypt. Sin is bitter to many, yet never made sufficiently bitter, Prov. xxiii. 35. But God lays still more and more gall and wormwood on the breasts of the man's lusts, when he is curing till it be the most bitter of all things.

3. Hence the soul groans under the remains of corruption, saying, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." It aspires to, and longs after perfect health, Phil. iii. 13, 14. The remains of sin are iron chains, which makes the soul walk heavily. There is not a more dangerous symptom than for persons to rest satisfied with their attainments.

4. That soul begins to long for its spiritual food. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." They desire Christ and his ordinances for the nourishment of their souls, and make use of Christ and his ordinances for that end. Indeed incured souls may delight in the word as it pleases their fancy, or fills their head with knowledge; but the soul that is cured, delights in it, as it fills the soul with purity, and the heart with comfort.

To those in whom Christ has begun the cure, I would say,

1. Be thankful to the Physician, and wonder at his condescension, that ever he should have set his eye on you, and passed by so many, in no worse case than thyself. Let not the remains of your disease, make you overlook the begun cure.

2. Pity and pray for the dying world. Men who in a shipwreck, have got safe ashore, can they stand unconcerned, seeing their fellows falling and sinking in the sea, Tit. iii. 1—6. Employ and improve your acquaintance with the Physician for the cure of others. Pray him to make the waters of the sanctuary healing waters.

3. Beware of relapses, falling back into the distempers of which you have been cured. Relapses are very dangerous, and because the

cure is as yet imperfect, easily fallen into, therefore walk softly, like Hezekiah; Isa. xxxviii. 15.

Lastly, Beware of evil company as you would of a plague-house. It is difficult to touch pitch, and not be defiled. Beware of profane company, and of formal company that have light, but no heat of affection to the advancing of holiness in themselves and others.

DOCTRINE III. Sin has laid mankind under a necessity to have a Saviour, or sinners as sinners, stand in need of Christ. This is a chief point of the doctrine of the gospel, and could we once get the truth of it, deeply impressed on the consciences of sinners, the fort would be almost gained.

Here we shall, *First*, Shew what sort of need this is. *Secondly*, What sort of a Saviour sinners need. *Thirdly*, I shall endeavour to give you a view of sinners' need of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. We are to shew what sort of need this is. This need of a Saviour, is a need in order to salvation. People need many things, yet they may be without them; but if our salvation be lost, all is gone. The sick man may need many things; he may want house, food, and raiment; but the great thing is health. Though all the rest be laid to his hand, yet if his disease cut him off, what avails all these things.

There is a two-fold need. A thing may be necessary, either, 1. For conveniency and better being of the thing; or 2. Absolutely, so as a thing cannot be without it. In the former respect a horse is necessary for a journey; in the last, the eye is necessary for seeing.

Now the sinner's need of a Saviour is absolute. There can be no salvation without a Saviour. A man can no more see God in mercy without Christ, than he can see at all without an eye. It would be true that we needed a Saviour, if we could not be saved without him, but with very great difficulty. But our need of Christ as a Saviour draws much deeper, it is an absolute need.

This is plain from Scripture, Acts iv. 12. Without Christ without hope, Ephes. ii. 12. The way of salvation is narrow, miss but one step and the case is without remedy, "for he that believeth not shall be damned." Hence the case of the devils is hopeless, "For verily Jesus took not on him the nature of angels." We proceed,

II. To shew what sort of a Saviour sinners need.

I. Such an one as is a righteous and innocent person, one that needeth none to save himself from sin. Physician heal thyself, is a valid objection against any pretending to be the physician of souls. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

2. One that is able for the work. If he were not able for it, the

work must misgive in his hand. Now if the work misgive, the sinner is ruined. It is not little that is required here. He must be able to pay an infinite price, for an infinite guilt, to an infinite God. Hence,

3. He must be one that is a middle person betwixt God and man, even God-man in one person. Our Saviour behoved to be man: 1. That he might be capable to suffer death, "for without shedding of blood there is no remission." 2. That the same nature which sinned might suffer, Heb. ii. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 21. He behoved also to be God: 1. To give infinite value to his sufferings. 2. That he might be able to bear up under, and to come out from under that infinite wrath which he had to bear. And he behoved to be God and man in one person, that so what was done or suffered by either of the natures, might be considered as done or suffered by the person, Acts xx. 28.

4. He must be one that has a commission for the work. "No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." For it was in the option of an offended God, whether to exact satisfaction from the parties themselves, or to admit a surety.

Lastly, He behoved to be one acquainted with the condition of those whom he was to save. This is self-evident. For how can the remedy be rightly and suitably applied, unless the Physician know well the condition of the patients.

Now, where shall we find this Saviour? If we believe the Church of Rome, we will have more saviours than one, particularly the saints departed, and the angels, to whom they pray, and in whom they place their confidence, whereby they bring themselves under that fearful curse. "Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." The Socinians also do this, by denying the Divinity of Christ. But are any of them able for that work? Are they God? Hos. xiii. 4. Where is their commission? How do the saints departed know our necessities? Eccles. ix. 5, 6. To take notice of all persons and all occurrences in the world, at the same time, is an infinite perfection.

But behold, we find all these in Christ. He was altogether without sin, Heb. vii. 26. He was, and is able to save, Psal. lxxxix. 19; Heb. vii. 25. He was indeed a middle person, God and man in one person, meet to be a day's man. In him Job had his wish, Job ix. 33. Do you ask his commission? See Isa. lxi. 1. Do you doubt his acquaintance with your case? He tells the churches "he knows their works," Rev. ii. 13. He is God, and we "cannot go from his spirit, or flee from his presence."

III. I shall endeavour to give you a view of sinners' need of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here I shall state, illustrate, and confirm, five propositions.

PROPOSITION I. Sinners had an absolute need of Christ's coming into the world. It was a strange cure, but absolutely necessary for a perishing world. There is a threefold coming of Christ into the world:

1. In the morning of time he came, in the promise and representation by the sacrifices. When Adam fell, was cited, examined, condemned, betwixt the sentence and execution of it, Christ came in the promise. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." Sacrifices were offered; for it is most rational to think that the beasts, with whose skins Adam's body was covered, were offered before in sacrifice for his soul; and it is most probable that all this was the same day Adam was created.

O what need was there of this his coming! we see it in the type, the ram caught in the thicket. Had not Christ thus come, men had been born into the world as into the suburbs of hell, and the world had been filled with the desperate roarings of fallen helpless sinners.

2. He came personally in the fulness of time. "For then God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law." He came and tabernacled among us. The Word was made flesh. Man sinning would needs be as God, and to save them, God must become man.

3. He came by his Spirit in the apostles after his ascension; opening the gates of heaven and way of salvation, to the Jews and Gentiles indiscriminately. He "thus came, and preached peace to you which were far off, and to them that were nigh." Of these two I shall speak together, as that one coming of Christ into the world, which was absolutely necessary for the miserable world.

Now to shew you the need there was of Christ's coming thus, let us take a view of the world as it was when he came. It had lasted from the creation till the birth of Christ, three thousand nine hundred and forty-five years; and from the deluge, two thousand two hundred and eighty-nine, according to the best computations. In this time, it had come to a wrinkled face, "the whole head was sick, and heart faint." All was in such disorder, that there was need of a new creation. The world was then divided into Jews and Gentiles, an unequal division, indeed, in respect of number; the former being only those of the Jewish nation, with a few that joined now and then to them from among other nations. No nation under heaven but they were a church, Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20. We shall then have a view of the state of the world at that time, and so see

the need there was of Christ's coming; if we view the state of the Gentiles and of the Jews, and the partition wall betwixt the two.

1. Consider the partition wall that was then betwixt Jews and Gentiles, Eph. ii. 14, 15. There was betwixt them, 1. A partition wall of God's making, that is the ceremonial law, so called with an allusion to the wall of Solomon's temple, that was betwixt the court of the people and of the Gentiles, which prevented all manner of passage, sight, and communication betwixt them. This, consisting of so many rites and ceremonies, divided them from all the world besides, and by God's own command, they might not have familiar intercourse with the Gentiles. The Jews had made this wall higher themselves, Acts xi. 8.

There was also a wall of men's own making, and that was the enmity betwixt Jews and Gentiles. There was a deadly hatred betwixt them. The Jews called the Gentiles dogs, and reproached them with their uncircumcision. The Gentiles again mock at their circumcision, their sabbaths, and other institutions.

What need was there here of a reconciler, to make both one, which was the effect of Christ's coming. We find Christ himself forbidding his apostles, "to go into the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into any city of the Samaritans." But afterwards, the vail of the temple was rent in twain, and he gave them a new commission, "to go and teach all nations." Then Isa. xi. 6, 7, began to be fulfilled.

2. Let us look to the Gentiles, and among them see our fathers. that were without this partition; and there we shall see them "at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." They were the visible kingdom of the devil, under the power of darkness, the way of salvation utterly unknown among them. As to the wise men among them, "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." They were drowned in superstition. The oracles of the devil were famous, magic and witchcraft prevailed. The idea of God was broken in pieces by them, like a great looking-glass, and in every piece of it they thought they saw a God. Varro reckons above thirty thousand worshipped by the Europeans alone. They were given over to all sort of filthiness, Rom. i. 23—32. They were very cruel, as appears from their human sacrifices, the bloody spectacle of the gladiators, and the like. "Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils."

These, and such like, were the works of the devil, which Christ came to destroy. Who can consider a world lying in this miserable posture, and not hear their needs piercing the heavens with cries for a Saviour.

3. Let us look within the partition wall, and behold the nation to whom alone God had manifested himself; and here, if you except a few that were groaning and longing for the consolation of Israel, you will see a miserable face on the whole generation of the Jews. They were most corrupt in their doctrine, bewitched with their own traditions, and even their teachers knew nothing of regeneration, John iii. 10. Their divinity was to build on their birth privilege from Abraham, so that they reckoned all Israel was to have share in the world to come; to rest on the law and their own works, to account the day of expiation, afflictions, and death, expiatory. They were most corrupt in their manners. That generation "was a generation of vipers, a wicked and adulterous generation;" the sink of all iniquity, and common sewer of vengeance, "that upon them might come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of Zacharias."

And was it not a sick world, and needed the Physician, when in such a case. And here we ought to admire the goodness of God to us, who were amongst the utmost parts of the earth, lying in the same darkness with other pagan nations. Our own historians tell us our forefathers had the same pagan religion with the ancient Gauls, in which human sacrifices made a great part. But now Christ is come, and set up his standard among us.

Proposition II. There was an absolute necessity of the death of Christ, in order to the saving of sinners. This appears,

1. From vindictive justice, which is essential to God. God cannot but hate sin, and so must needs have a propensity to punish it, Psalm v. 5, 6. That God is such an one, is evident from Scripture, Rom. ii. 5; 2 Thes. i. 6; Heb. xii. 29. That God is just, is engraven on the minds of all men. The heathens saw it by nature's light, Rom. i. 32; Acts xxviii. 4. Conscience is God's deputy in the soul, and from that impression which divine justice hath set upon it, dooms the sinner to misery. Sin coming forth of the soul leaves a sting behind it.

2. The law of God requires it, which denounceth death because of sin, Gen. ii. 17; Gal. iii. 10; Rom. vi. 23. Now seeing God cannot lie, this must be fulfilled either in the sinner, or in the cautioner. Man being a rational creature, by the very frame of his soul must be under a law. God that made him, must needs be his governor and judge; and being so, must conduct himself as becomes one of infinite justice. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right."

3. Unless Christ's sufferings had been necessary for our salvation, and to take away our sins, there can no satisfying account be given

of them. It is in vain to say, it was for confirming his doctrine, and to give an example of all virtues. For his doctrines were confirmed by his miracles, and a perfect example exhibited through his whole life. After which, if there was no other necessity for his shedding his blood, Judas' question would not have been impertinent, "What needeth all this waste?" It is consistent with the goodness and wisdom of God, to make his Son the curse causeless? Would he have taken a compass, and gone round about by his Son's blood, to take away the sins of the elect, if a word could have done it. Surely the apostle tells us, "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." But if a mere nothing might do it, why not the blood of costly sacrifices. But we are expressly told, "that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin," Heb. ix. 22, 23.

Lastly, The love of God in sending Christ, and in giving him to the death, cannot be seen but in this way. The scripture does proclaim the exceeding greatness of that love, in giving Christ to die for sinners, John iii. 16; Rom. v. 8. But if the sinner might have been saved, and God's Son spared also, where is that love? On the contrary, supposing that justice says sin must be punished, either the Son or the sinner must die; in this case, God's parting with his Son, was an unparalleled act of love.

The Socinians themselves acknowledge, that it is unworthy of God not to punish obstinate sinners. Now, upon this I would say, 1. Obstinacy is not punished for itself, because in what is good, obstinacy is constancy and a duty. It is punished, then, only because it is in evil. Sin is punished for itself, but obstinacy for the sin only. If sin then be punished for itself, every sin must be punished. Again, if Christ had not died, all sinners would have been obstinate and impenitent. Repentance would never have been given by an unattoned God, Acts v. 31.

O what a horrible evil is sin! Was not the stain deep that could not be washen out but by the blood of God? Shall we love that which stabbed him to the heart, or live in that for which he died. Can that be light which made him sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground? or that sweet, which put gall and vinegar in his cup? O let the blood of Christ springing forth from his heart, be cords of love to draw thee from sin, which, while thou indulgest thyself in it, thou not only tramplest on the law, but on the wounds of the Son of God, Heb. x. 28, 29.

Proposition III. The exaltation of Christ was absolutely necessary for sinners' salvation; that is, his resurrection ascension, and sitting down at the Father's right hand. The necessities of perish-

ing sinners cried to him to come out of the grave, and go to heaven For,

1. The death of Christ had not been effectual, if he had not risen again. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Had he remained still in the grave, all our hopes had been buried and perished with him. His death had died, and been of no effect. "But now God hath raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." The sins of the elect, Christ's gravestone, are taken off. God sent his angel as an officer, to open the prison door.

2. No less necessary was his ascending into heaven for the atoning for the sins of the elect. This was typified by the high priest's (after he had killed the sin offering) going into the holiest of all with the blood, and with incense on the golden censer. So Christ presented to the Father his blood, and sits down there as intercessor. Had he not gone before us, we could have had no hopes of entering heaven, Heb. vi. 20. They had need of an advocate at the court of heaven, who have continual business there, which they themselves are not capable to manage.

Proposition IV. Sinners have absolute need of union with Christ. He that came into the world in their nature, must come into their hearts, and dwell there by his Spirit, else they cannot be saved. They must be joined to him and made one with him by faith, else they will perish, whatever else they pretend to. What will it avail you in the sight of God, if Christ be not your Saviour. All perished that were not in the ark.

1. Unless you be in Christ, God cannot be well pleased with you. It is only "in the beloved that you can find acceptance." The Lord looks upon men as in one of two, either in the first or in the second Adam; as in the first, God looks upon us as enemies, but in Christ as friends. Wo to them that appear before God, but not in their elder brothers garments.

2. You cannot be justified, Rom. v. 1. There is a sentence of condemnation on all mankind by nature. There is no taking off of this, without union to Christ. Sin remains unpardoned, the sentence stands in force till the sinner be in Christ; for God is just, his judgment is according to truth. He cannot justify a sinner, but on the account of a perfect righteousness. None have it of their own, and there is no communion with Christ in his righteousness, but by union with him.

3. You cannot be children of God, but the slaves of the devil. The only way of adoption is by receiving Christ, and believing on

his name, John i. 12. How can you, who are born children of the devil, become the children of God, but by a spiritual marriage with his Son. "If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." And if we be not children, we cannot be heirs of God.

4. You can do nothing that is pleasing and good in his sight. "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." First the tree must be good, then the fruit. Christ is the life of the soul, Gal. ii. 20; and without Christ, all our works are but dead works. Our fruits will be found as the apples of Sodom, fair to look upon, but when touched fall to ashes.

PROPOSITION V. We stand in need of Christ in all his offices. Our necessities call aloud for all the offices with which he is invested.

I. We need him as a prophet, teacher, and interpreter of the Father's mind to us. Can we know a man's mind but by his words? No, surely, for nature has not granted us a window to look into their hearts. No more can we know the mind of God, without the words of Christ, John iii. 13.

1. How could we ever have known the mind of God concerning man's salvation without him. "For no man hath seen God at any time the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." None but he could have brought life and immortality to light. That counsel might, for us, have remained through eternity hid in the breast of the Father. The heathens could look up to the heavens and read much of God's goodness, wisdom, and power, Rom. i. 20; but none could ascend into heaven and enter God's secrets, but he that was in the bosom of the Father, and on his cabinet councils, John iii. 13.

2. How can we get saving illumination without him. "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." By him God made the world laying the foundation of it in light, and by him he hath formed the new world. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus." We lost our eyes in Adam; we cannot discern one truth spiritually and savingly, while out of Christ, 1 Cor. ii. 14. O! the vast difference betwixt book learning, and and what is learned from the Spirit. I refer it to the experience of the godly, if saving illumination was not as the bringing them to a new world, which they never saw before. This makes unlearned Christians able to suffer for Christ, when others can only dispute for him. You may read the best books with attention: but if Christ be not your teacher by his Spirit, you will never know any thing to purpose.

3. How think you to get through the world without him; to know sin and duty in particular cases, and to go safely through the snares and temptations, with which the world abounds? Moses would not venture on the journey through the wilderness without his presence, "the cloud of glory." And the Father has seen it necessary to give him "a leader to his people, Isa. lv. 4.

4. How can we read the Bible profitably without him? I confess there are but few much concerned about this. The dust of their Bibles will witness against them. Others by their reading get their heads filled with knowledge, and may have the history of it on their finger ends; but alas! still it is but a sealed book to them. Like the eunuch, "they understand not what they read, not having one to guide them." Only Christ can here teach you to profit. He only "can open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of God's law." Whatever others say, exercised souls will say it is true; for they know what it is, sometimes to have the Bible a sealed, at other times an opened book.

5. How will you get your case resolved without him? Few are exercised about their case. "They are at ease from their youth, and settled on their lees." They are like the door on the hinges. Conscience is become stupied. No small thing will awaken it. But they who are exercised about the case of their souls, will see their need of him. Men may speak to an exercised soul, but if Christ speak not, the remedy will not be effectual. "He hath the tongue of the learned, and knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." True it is, the watchmen may find the spouse, but it is not by their own act, but by Christ speaking in them, or by them; and whatever difficulty some have to believe the presence of God in ordinances, yet some can from experience "report that God is in you of a truth." Sometimes the soul of the Christian is so exercised, as almost to despair of deliverance: but see how deliverance comes, Job xxxiii. 19—26.

Lastly, How will you understand the dispensations of Providence without him? "His way is in the sea, and his footsteps are not known," who but himself can unfold them. There are many dark passages in a Christian's life; what must they do, but go to Christ with them, Psal. lxxiii; John xiii. Many a time, the child of God is at a stand with providences. They appear to them as the wrong side of things; they cannot see the beauty, harmony, and order of them, till they go to Christ with them, who is able to satisfy them.

II. We need him as a priest, seeing we have sinned against the Lord. We need him in both parts of this office, his satisfaction and intercession.

I. We need his satisfaction, the sacrifice of himself, his blood as the Scripture terms it. This is a fountain in which we must be washed. With this our souls must be sprinkled, else we perish.

1. There is no answering the demands of justice and the law, without this blood. The law requires, and justice demands satisfaction for a broken covenant of works. Their demands run high, namely, that it be infinite, either in respect of value or duration, for an infinite God is offended, and sin is a kind of infinite evil. Now sinner that art out of Christ, how canst thou answer these demands? Suppose thou shouldst begin and suffer from the cradle to the grave, all those will be but useless to this purpose. Sooner may a child fill up the sea with little stones, than thou satisfy the demands of law and justice. No plea will avail here, but that of "Christ's blood, which cleanseth from all sin." He is the city of refuge, the high priest that died for us.

2. There is no peace with God without him and his blood, Rom. v. 10. It is Christ's blood only, that procures our peace, and atones for rebel sinners. That is it which quencheth the fire of God's wrath, that otherwise would burn up the sinner. Prayers and entreaties would not do it, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission."

3. There is no pardon without this blood. Guilt is so deep in the soul, that nothing but Christ's blood will wash it away. Wouldst thou have a pardon, sinner, it must come to thee through Christ, "in whom we have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins." This is the only remedy.

4. There is nothing able to purge us from an evil conscience, but this blood. An evil conscience is a dreadful companion. It is a tormentor. Guilt makes it uneasy, or will do so. Many have other ways to cure their uneasy consciences, but these will only heal the wound superficially, and it will break out again. The Scripture knows of no cure, but the blood of Jesus, "which purgeth the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." What need have we then to come to the blood of sprinkling.

II. We stand in need of Christ to be our intercessor with the Father, to appear in the presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 24. If we have not him for our friend at the court of heaven, we need never think to come there.

1. If Christ be not our intercessor with the Father, we can have no peace made or kept up with God; as it is by his intercession that the peace purchased by his blood is first made up, so by the same means it is continued. We are every day offending; how stands the covenant then, why is it not broken? "If any man sin,

we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Because, while we live we sin, therefore Christliv es to intercede. He is ready to say, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." What shall become of them then, that are still sinning, and have no intercessor? they are treasuring up wrath.

2. We want not an accuser before the Lord. "Satan is the accuser of the brethren; and accuses them before our God, day and night." The devil first tempts, then accuseth. Have we not then need of one to answer these accusations against us, Zech. iii. 1, 2. Without this there is no safety, but in Christ's intercession we may boast against all, Rom. viii. 33, 34.

3. Without him we can have no communion and fellowship with God. It is by his intercession, that we have access to God in duties. "In him we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him." The word signifies a leading by the hand, alluding to the custom in the courts of princes, where none may come to the presence-chamber, but those who are brought in by some favourite or courtier. Many come to duties, to prayers, sermons, &c., but there is no intercourse betwixt God and them. Why? "Nay," God says to them, as Joseph did to his brethren, "except you bring your brother with you, you shall not see my face."

4. Without him, your services and duties cannot be accepted. He must present them, else they will be rejected, Rev. viii. 3. The best sacrifice wants not dung, which must be burnt up by the efficacy of Christ's blood and intercession. No hearing of prayer without his intercession. God will hear no prayers as they come out of the sinner's mouth, but as out of his Son's mouth, as presented by him.

III. We stand in need of him as our King and Lord. Christ has a twofold kingdom: his essential kingdom, and his mediatory kingdom; the former over all, the latter over his people. This kingdom is administered externally and internally; we stand in need of both.

I. We stand in need of Christ to be our King outwardly, to govern us in a visible church state. It has been the cry of our land, we will have no king but Cæsar; the magistrate having been invested with a blasphemous supremacy over all persons in all causes. This cannot be taken off, by saying he is a subordinate, not a co-ordinate head. The pope never pretended to more. But from the Scripture we learn the church is not a monster with two heads. "Christ himself is head over all things to the church." That Christ is the only head and King of his church, hath been the doctrine of the protestants against the papists, to cut off the pope's supremacy; and therefore, in the large confession of the Church of Scotland, it was de-

clared blasphemy to acknowledge another head. This shews the contradictory nature of the test. Now we stand in need of Christ to be our King.

1. Consider the sad and woeful case these are in that are without this visible kingdom of Christ. These are the dark places of the earth, that are the habitations of cruelty, Eph. ii. 12. The visible church of Christ on earth, is the only society in which safety can be found. The Scripture calls it the kingdom of heaven, for here the King of heaven reigns, Psal. ii. 6. Here are the laws of heaven, Heb. xii. 25; here the subjects of heaven dwell; even those who are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of faith; and here the glory of heaven is begun; for the God of all grace hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ.

2. Consider and view the several parts of this kingly government of Christ as externally administered, and the need of the same will quickly appear. These are, 1. Christ's calling a people out of the world to the profession of his truth, Acts xv. 14. 2. Giving them laws and ordinances, Isa. xxxiii. 22. 3. Officers, Eph. iv. 11, 12. 4. Defending the church from her enemies, Psal. cx.

How needful this calling out of a people from the world to the profession of his truth, and making up a church was, and is, may appear from what has been already said; see that one place, Isa. ix. 2, 3. What society can be well governed without laws? The wicked cannot abide Christ's laws. Psal. ii. 3; but without them all would go to confusion. He has instituted ordinances, the word, sacraments and discipline in his church, all which are of evident necessity to the church of God. These are a burden to many. They can live without the hearing of the word, and without sacraments. These are ties which they like not to come under. They will not subject themselves to discipline, it is a yoke too hard for their fair necks, but so necessary, as that without it, the church would be like "a city that is broken down and without walls." Much contempt is poured out on the office-bearers of Christ's house. Ministers are looked upon by many as a sort of almost useless creatures, hence long desolation of parishes; but see Eph. iv. 11; Prov. xxix. 18. And unless the church were defended, enemies restrained and conquered, the wild boar of the forest would soon eat up that planting of the Lord.

II. We stand in need of Christ to be our King, in respect of the inward administration of his government in and over our souls. His kingdom must be within us, else we will never reach his kingdom of glory. The visible church is this King's house, but the believer's heart is the throne and chair of state. "He dwells in their hearts

by faith." Many are subjects of Christ's visible kingdom, who are really subjects of the devil's invisible kingdom. Many give Christ the hand that never gave him the heart. But our having Christ for our King inwardly, is absolutely necessary to our salvation. If Christ be not your King in this way, then,

1. How can you be his true and loyal subjects? The first act of Christ's kingly office is subduing us to himself. We are born enemies to God, and Christ has his kingdom to raise up out of a company of rebels, Rom. viii. 7. What will bring them in to him? Men cannot. Only a day of power will do it. Then he makes them willing. Where the word of a king is, there is power. He can make them run at a call then, Isa. lv. 5; and xliv. 22. None but King Jesus is able to rob the devil of subjects, and take off the fetters from the sinner's will. He gets no subjects but by stroke of sword. The devil likes his subjects better than to part with them easily, and they like his service better than to be ready to leave it, therefore there must be a drawing power.

2. How can you get true repentance without him? He is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins. Many think repentance an easy thing, but it is not so. The mere word, good advice, and education, will not produce it. Our hearts and our lusts are more firmly glued together, than to be rent asunder by a wedge of our own timber. If you get no other repentance than what is spun out of your own bowels, that will be swept away as a spider's web.

3. How can we get lusts mortified without him? The least of them is too strong for us, therefore he hath said, he will subdue our iniquities. Our own spirits are sufficient to carry us on in the way of the flesh, but the Spirit of Christ is necessary for true mortification, Rom. viii. 13. How soon will our lusts turn our masters, if we grapple with them in our own strength.

4. How can we be right ruled but by him. If his Spirit rule not in our hearts, there will be nothing but confusion in them. Wo to that man, that gets the reins laid on his own neck, and is left to be his own steersman through the sea of this world. They will never come safe to land, and therefore the Spirit of truth is promised to guide us into all truth. The Father, therefore has appointed Jesus to be the Captain of our Salvation, to lead and guide the people of God to their rest in the heavenly Canaan, Micah ii. 13.

5. How shall we be defended against our spiritual enemies, but by him? We have many enemies, many snares and temptations are in our way. We have a subtile devil, and a multitude of inward lusts. We are not able for the least of them, unless he defend us.

Lastly, Who shall conquer and restrain our enemies but he? None other has Satan in a chain, nor can bruise him under our feet, but he who bruised his head.

For APPLICATION. What hath been said, serves, 1. For instruction, and it lets us see,

1. What is our case by sin. We may discern three things in it:

1. We may discern here the heinousness of our guilt. It was dreadful to behold Adam cast out of paradise—hell rained out of heaven upon Sodom—but much more, to see the Son of God necessitated to come out of heaven, out of his Father's bosom, and bear his wrath. It could be no small thing that occasioned all this. Think on this, thou that thinkest little of sin. Behold the Son of God dying on a cross for it.

2. Pollution of our souls by it, and there hatefulness in the sight of the Lord. The sinner can have no access to God without a Mediator. No admission into his presence, but as washed with the blood of Christ. O deep stain! that could not be washed away, but by the blood of God.

3. Our inability to help ourselves. We are fallen into a pit, a gulf of misery. We must perish there, unless helped out. It passeth our power and skill to recover ourselves. How low then has sin laid us.

2. We see with what a God we have to do. Those who are unacquainted with Christ, in whose face his glory shines, cannot properly know God. He is a just and holy God. Fools make a mock of sin, because they think God such an one as themselves. But God will not be mocked. Sinners will find to their cost, that he is both just and holy, and that he will burn them up, in case they get not one to stand between them and him when he is angry.

3. The dangerous case in which they are, that are out of Christ. You may as easily climb up to heaven by a ladder of your own making, as get salvation without him. Pretend to what you will, if you have no just pretences to Christ, you are ruined eternally. Do what you will, suffer what you will, nothing will avail without your being in Christ. If you should leave the world and dwell in a wilderness, dig your grave with your nails, live on grass, weep for your sins till you weep out your eyes—as a thousand cyphers alone still stand for nothing without a figure before them, so all that you can think, do, or suffer without Christ, will be useless.

4. That they are a blessed people that are in Christ, and that they should be ever making use of him, seeing they are ever sinning. As we are still defilling ourselves, still we should be dipping in the fountain.

Use 2. Of exhortation. Be convinced then, sinners, of your need of Christ, and let your necessities drive you to him. Alas! few are sufficiently convinced of their absolute need of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an error here, that is the cause of many others. Of it there are clear evidences, such as,

1. The sound rest which many get in their sins, sleeping on the mercy of God. There is a generation going on in their sins, and yet have peace and hopes of salvation, and that merely because God is merciful. These see no need of the Lord Jesus. They know not that Jesus is the only conduit, through which mercy flows to sinners. They consider not, that they cannot taste of mercy, unless they be in him. Mercy cannot save if you be out of Christ, for it cannot act in prejudice to justice, and God cannot deny himself.

2. How few have ever got a sight of sin in its own colours. This is evident from their making so light of it. Many live under the gospel, who were never yet under convictions from the Spirit, of their sinfulness and misery by nature. They confess they are sinners, and who denies that; but they were never perplexed about their soul's state, nor ever put to it, to ask what shall we do to be saved? and surely till a man knows his disease to be dangerous, he will never see the need of the Physician. Are there not some, whom their soul's case never sent to their knees.

3. How few are there, that will refuse comfort and rest in anything, till they get an interest in Christ secured. If we saw our absolute need of Christ, it would be so, Acts ii. 37. What pleasure can a condemned man take in any thing, till he get a pardon. The man who sees his danger will say, what can omnipotence give me, while I go Christless. But alas! few keep pace with the church, Lam. iii. 49, 50. They can take up their rest in the world, when they get nothing of Christ.

4. How few are there brought to that, to leave no mean untried, in order to get an interest in Christ, and salvation. It is a matter of life and death, and all that a man hath, will he give for his life. Necessity has no law. Every possible exertion must be made. But alas! most part of men are easily diverted in their pursuit of an interest in Christ, and if they cannot attain their desire with ease, they will let it go. Hence, some professors in their duties, are like the door on the hinges. Still there is one thing they lack.

5. How few are brought to be content to part with all for Christ, and to take him on any terms. Surely a sight of absolute need, would make the soul content to put a blank in Christ's hand, saying, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? What will not a condemned man give for pardon? See you a man prigging much in the

market, you may conclude either that he can want the article, or knows some other quarter whence he may get it. The soul that sees its need, must have him cost what it will.

6. How many can live in peace, weeks, months, and years, without communion with him. Are there not some, who never knew in experience, what communion with Christ is? Some that will not bow a knee to God for it; some content with the bare performance of duties, are never anxious about that, whether they find Christ in them or not. They reign as kings without him. As king Saul, from whom God is departed, they never see the king's face.

Lastly, The little pains people are at, to get Scriptural evidence of their interest in Christ. Many hope they have an interest in him, but were never at pains to examine the foundation of their hopes. If a man were to be let down a steep rock by a rope, would he not try whether it could bear his weight or not.

This may convince many of us, that we do not sufficiently see our need of Christ; and therefore receive the conviction and know, that thou that wast never acquainted with this, art yet out of Christ, and so in a fearful state. And I would exhort you to have so much compassion on your souls, as to retire this night, and, 1. Meditate on what a God thou hast to do with. 2. On thy sinful and miserable state; and 3. Pray the Lord may open your eyes. And to quicken a sense of your need of Christ, and to urge you to close with him, I would ask you these questions:

1. How think you to live without Christ? I am sure your life will be a continued death without him. These bodies of yours, will be but living coffins for dead souls, with the curse of God upon them for a grave-stone. Though may in prosperity, yet how will you do you do in adversity? The clouds are growing black above the heads of the people of the land. I fear days are coming, in which the Lord will plead his controversy; and how dreadful will it be for a deluge of wrath to come upon a man who is not in the ark of safety.

2. How will you die without Christ? You may think light of him now; but when death settles down on these eyelids, and the grim king carries thee over into the ocean of eternity, if Christ keep thee not, where art thou then?

3. How wilt thou appear before God to judgment without him? Will not the face of God, whose Son thou hast slighted, be terrible to thee? To see this Christ, who is now freely offered to you as a Saviour, sitting at the right hand of God, but not to open a mouth for thee there, but against thee as a slighter of him, and a neglecter of his great salvation. How will you then escape? Amen.

Simprin, February 16, 1707.

CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS STATED, AND ENFORCED.

SERMON XXXV.

MARK xiii. 37,

And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.

THESE words are the conclusion of our Lord's discourse, begun at the 5th verse of this chapter. Here he tells them the design of speaking these things, that they were not designed for them alone who heard them, but for all others, that minded to be his followers. What things does he mean? The text refers to the whole preceding discourse, the word being in the plural number; and so it refers to watching, which he had before pressed upon them, and now presses again.

DOCTRINE. It is the duty of all to watch. For illustrating this, I shall,

I. Shew what it is to watch.

II. I shall, under several branches, speak of the object of watching.

III. I shall enforce the doctrine, by giving reasons why we should watch. I am then,

I. To shew what it is to watch.

Watching is a military term. By watching, the army is secured from a surprise by the enemy. It properly belongs to the body to watch, because it only is properly subject to sleep. Even this bodily watching may be religious, 2 Cor. vi. 5; Psal. lxiii. 6; but it is commonly used in scripture for the watching of the soul, which is subject to a spiritual sleep. There are two things in it,

1. The soul's keeping spiritually awake, for to watch is opposed to sleeping. When Jesus found his disciples sleeping, "he said unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour?" The time of our being in the world is night, Rom. xiii. 12, and it is very natural to sleep in the night; "for they that sleep, sleep in the night." But we must not sleep, but be awake; that is, keep grace in exercise. We must keep from carnal security and spiritual sloth, which are very apt to creep in upon us, after the greatest enjoyment and appearances of God, Song v. 3. This is a sweet sin, in which a man will take pleasure, when other sins give him no satisfaction. We must also keep the soul in spiritual motion and

holy exercise. When we sleep we rest. Our rest is not here, and therefore we must be always moving heavenwards. As the fire on the altar was kept always burning, so we must be always watching. If we begin to droop, we must rouse ourselves.

2. Observation. The sentinel that walketh the round, unless he carefully observe what he may see, cannot be said to watch. Thus the shepherds kept watch over their flocks by night, Luke ii. 8. Our mind must be intent upon our business, that we may catch all advantages against, and ward off hazard from the enemy. Hence watching is expressed by taking heed, and by looking to ourselves, 1 Cor. x. 12; 2 John 8. We are now,

II. Under several branches to speak of the object of watching. The branches are these three,

I. Some things we must watch over to keep them right.

II. Some things we must watch against.

III. Some things we must watch for.

I. There are some things we must watch over to keep them right.

1. Watch over yourselves. "Only," said Moses, "take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life." Every man is his own nearest neighbour, and so his worst enemy is nearest to him. None capable to do us so much harm.

Watch then over your heads, your principles, 1 Tim. iv. 1. The spirit of delusion rageth. New doctrines are very enticing to those that have not had the spiritual relish, and felt the efficacy of the old upon their hearts, 2 Tim. iv. 3, and iii. 4. When the truth is not received with love, the spirit of delusion leads men to believe a lie.

Watch over your hearts. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The heart is the source of action. It is as the eye to the body. "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." The same may be said of the heart. There is, then, the greatest need for watching it, "for it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." He would act foolishly, who desiring to keep the water pure, would sit down by the streams, neglecting the fountain. To watch the outward man and not the heart, is to shut the door and the thief in the house.

The thoughts of the heart must be watched. "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee." Thus David declares, "I hate vain thoughts." Thoughts are the births of our

hearts, and we had need to watch, and observe of what sort they are, and stifle evil thoughts in the womb, lest through unwatchfulness they swarm forth and defile the whole man, Mark viii. 20—23. One wandering thought has been a wide door at which the soul's life and vigour in duties have gone out, being as a dart struck through the heart of a bird singing on a tree.

Watch also the affections of the heart. Good ones are easily crushed, and evil ones, like bad weeds, grow up apace, Song ii. 15. O! how ready are our affections to go astray, either on unlawful, or else immoderately on lawful objects; and when once set on, they run along, as the fire in the train, Ecci. vi. 9. Therefore, watch your hearts. He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.

Watch over your tongues. "If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." It is dangerous to ride on an unbriddled horse. David said, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." "Again," said he, "set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips." The tongue boasteth great things. It is apt to fall into undue silence, or sinful speaking. A single word may be of dreadful consequence. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." The unruliness of the tongue it seems had cast the rich man in hell into a burning fever, where no cooling was to be expected, Luke xvi. 24.

Your senses must be watched. These are the gates of the soul, and when the town is besieged, strict watch must be kept at the gates. Satan lays his trains at these gates; if they be not guarded, the whole soul may be set on fire. The senses of hearing and seeing, must in an especial manner be watched. By the eyes and ears did the devil blow up all mankind in Adam and Eve. The eyes ruined Achan, and wounded David severely. Job was glad to make a covenant with them.

Watch over your feet, your walk and conversation. We are exhorted "to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." We should walk wisely, noticing every step. "We must watch in all things," for we are ready to stumble in all things. We must not walk at random; "but in all our ways acknowledge the Lord, and he shall direct our paths.

2. Watch over your graces. Grace is that fire sent down from heaven into the hearts of sinners, which must not be neglected, 2 Tim. i. 6. Our graces are subject to decay, though not to death.

Though grace cannot die out of the garden of the heart, when once it is implanted, yet it may be overgrown and hid. It is a great pledge of the Lord's love and every way precious, therefore to be watched, seeing it is in hazard.

3. Watch over your duties. Take heed how you hear, how you read, pray, meditate and communicate. Remember what Paul says, "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." Unwatchfulness in duties, makes them useless, like a man shooting an arrow at random. We should watch the outward man in duty. Men cannot pray sleeping, nor hear when gazing around them. Watch the inward man the soul, that it behave rightly. Satan is ready to cast a dead fly into the ointment to spoil all, or to send the birds flocking to the carcase. See how David set himself to his duty, "My voice," said he, "shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."

4. Watch over your attainments. "Look," says John, "to yourselves, that we lose not those things we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." If it were but a weak spark of grace, "yet be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." If it were but a conviction, let us say with David, "my sin is ever before me." "Quench not the Spirit." Do not let out the fire, by neglecting it. The cloud like a man's hand, if cherished, may ere long cover the heavens. See how watchful the spouse was, when she had found Christ, "I charge you," said she, "O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please."

II. There are some things we must watch against.

1. Watch against your lusts and corruptions. In an especial manner let us watch against the sin of our nature, called the old man, and by us usually the evil heart; that woful bent of our souls to evil, the body of sin, Rom. vii. 24. This reigns as a king in the unregenerate; and in the regenerate it is dethroned, but still endeavours to get the throne again, and in the meantime endeavours to command. "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof."

Watch against your former sins, with which you were sometimes led away, and have been engaging against. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." Your former loves will make suit again to you, and be in on you, if you watch not. Remember you are naturally bent to backslide, and, like Israel, to follow after your lovers; therefore look not back to Sodom.

Watch against your particular sins, to which you find yourselves most inclined. The strongest guard should always be at the weakest part of the wall. Every man has his weak side, his "sin that doth most easily beset him." Take notice of this by all means, and endeavour to lay it aside, that each may be able to say with David, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

Watch against little sins. The proverb is, the little thief makes least noise, but opens the door to the rest. An improper look to Bathsheba, in the end broke David's bones. A little sleep brings on want as an armed man.

2. Watch against appearances of evil, 1 Thess. v. 22. Neither do evil, nor what appears to be evil. Such as neglect this rule, offend and stumble others, and so offend God. They grieve the godly, and harden the wicked.

3. Against occasions of sin. It is difficult and dangerous for a man to walk with bags of powder among sparks. Peter in the high priest's hall, fell into a grievous sin. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." Sin has a lodging within, and wants but an occasion to call it forth, and therefore starve your lusts, by fleeing from occasions of sinning.

4. Watch against temptations to sin. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. You live amidst many snares. Be upon your guard, that you may resist when tempted, and throw not yourselves in the way of temptation. You cannot expect to escape temptations while here. God will have you tried, and temptations will easily lead aside the unwary.

5. Against evil company. A man is known by his company, and is always in some degree influenced by it. Evil communications corrupt good manners. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

III. There are some things we must watch for, as men watching for advantages against the enemy, and for strengthening themselves.

1. Watch for the proper season of duty. "Praying always," says Paul, "with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints." There is an opportunity for doing good, Gal. vi. 10, which, if not embraced, may do much harm. "To every thing there is a season." This may come and pass too without improvement, if a man be not watching. Many a fair child is lost by an untimely birth, and many a good duty is spoiled for want of doing it in its season. Every thing is beautiful in its season.

2. Watch for the motions of the Spirit. He is an unwise mariner that takes not heed to wind and tide. He can neither command them when he will, nor set out to sea without them. If a man be so happy as to watch the blowings of the Spirit, he may make good progress; otherwise, he may do much to little purpose. As soon as God revealed himself, "Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, if now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us, (for it is a stiff-necked people), and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance."

3. Watch for experiences, by observing carefully the dispensations of providence towards you. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." An observing Christian is rich in experience. "For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hand." Providence is every day big with advantage to the observing Christian. Sometimes it brings him a reproof, light, comfort, evidence of God's faithfulness, and such like things; but the unwatchful let all these escape.

4. Watch the success of your duties. David resolved not only that God should hear his voice in the morning, but also that he would look up for an answer. Observe how you succeed at a prayer, a sermon, or at a communion. The prayer that is not looked after, is not likely to reach God's ears. Alas! many go to God in duties, as children at their play come and knock at people's doors, and presently run away to their play again.

III. We are to enforce the doctrine, by giving reasons why we should watch.

1. Because God commands it, and that very often. He hath set us to our post, and we must watch and not sleep.

2. Because we have the enemy within our walls. A deceitful heart, with strong and deceitful lusts. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Therefore, says Solomon, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool, but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered." How can men sleep sound, when they know that cut-throats are within their houses? Thou hast within thee what will ruin thee, if thou watch not, though the devil should never attack thee. A man's enemies are those of his own house.

3. Because there are snares laid for us every where, by the devil and the world. Therefore, says Paul, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." There is no place where Satan has not his traps set for thee. In the wilderness he tempted

Christ; he tempted Eve when alone, and Peter in company. There are snares in thy lawful enjoyments, visible and invisible. Our time is like to be a time of snares, we have need to watch. Remember Jesus hath said, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

4. Because no duty can be done right, where this is wanting. If we would pray aright, "we must watch and pray." If we would hear aright, "we must take heed how we hear." If we would stand fast, "we must take heed lest we fall." As a servant must be awake if he would do any piece of work, so must a Christian.

Use 1.—Of reproof to the unwatchful. Alas! it is to be feared some of us have fallen asleep already. I will tell you how you will know it.

1. A silent conscience is a sign of a sleeping soul. When David cut off Saul's skirt, his heart smote him, for he was then awake; but when he committed murder, his conscience was silent till Nathan came to him, for he was asleep.

2. A dreaming man is asleep. Is thy heart saying peace, like Agag thinking the bitterness of death is past. Thou hast received the communion, and hast entered into engagements, and art not seeing the hazard of breaking your vows. I tell thee thou art sleeping in thy fetters. A waking Christian has his hazard always before him.

3. Loss of impressions of the work in which thou hast been engaged. A waking man finds the bands that are on him, but one asleep is insensible of them. Ah! how soon are they lost. The Israelites "soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel."

4. Laziness and heartlessness in going about duties. The spouse says, "By night on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not." How art thou now at thy duties?

Lastly, Forgetting of your work. Many that engage with Christ, are like servants called on by the master to do such service, they promise, but fall asleep, and forget it. "When Jesus found his disciples sleeping, he said unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour?" Are all your vows and engagements turned to that already?

Use 2. Watch at this time, and at all times.

Motive 1. Consider your danger. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." You are in hazard of falling into sin, even gross sins. There are many ditches in our way. If we watch not, we may be over head and ears, ere long. How did the

Israelites in the wilderness fall, notwithstanding their privileges. Peter fell very soon after the first communion. Many have so fallen, and so soon after a sacrament, that it would seem the devil had gone down with the sop. You are in danger of falling under God's displeasure: "But with many of them, God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Unwatchfulness opens the door to sin, sin to wrath. Where men's lusts dine with them, judgments will sup. "Behold," says Jesus, "I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

2. God is watching you, his eyes are upon you at all times; on your thoughts, words, and actions, Psal. cxxxix. The thief surely had need to watch his hands while in the sight of the judge.

3. The devil never sleeps, but is watching for your ruin. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." "But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." Would Sisera have lain down to sleep had he known the hammer and nail were in Jael's hand. Satan stands at thy hand.

4. What thou hast lost by former unwatchfulness. Hast thou not decayed and been brought very low by, and lost great attainments, and wilt thou not be wise?

Lastly, Consider the shortness and uncertainty of your time. It is short, therefore the devil will be busy, and you have the more need to make haste. This laborious trade will be the sooner over. There is no watching in heaven. Christ has told us he will come, but not when, that we may always watch, Mark. xiii. 32—37.

Directions. 1. Harbour no known sin in thy soul. This will stupify thy conscience.

2. Beware of immoderate affection to created enjoyments.

3. Crush security in the bud.

4. Keep up a sense of spiritual wants, and be daily travelling between Christ's fulness and your own emptiness. Amen.

January 25, 1708.

GOD HIDING HIS FACE FROM BACKSLIDERS.

SERMON XXXVI.

ISAIAH lxiv. 7,

And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

THIS chapter contains a prayer of the church in great distress, in which they plead with God for his return, confess their sin, and lament their case. In the sixth verse, they lament their sinfulness and misery, and here they bewail the helplessness of it, and the improbability of their recovery.

The time to which this relates is twofold; namely, the Babylonish captivity, and the final rejection of the Jews. This prophecy was before the Babylonish captivity, and that it hath a respect unto it, will scarcely be doubted; but that it looks further, is clear from the Lord's answer to the prayer, Isa. lxv. 1. Whence we observe, that though some are willing to part with Christ, he will always find others ready to entertain him.

In the text we have mentioned the general neglect of the duty, to which their circumstances called them: "There is none that calleth upon thy name." We are not to understand it, as if there were simply none at all; for in the worst of times, the Lord had always a remnant, that would not, for their part, give consent to his departure. The Lord reserved seven thousand in Elijah's days; but comparatively, there were so very few, that they were next to none, and could hardly be discerned amongst the multitude.

We have, also, the woful frame and temper of the spirits of professors in that day. "None stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." There was a general deadness and indifference, nothing like an active vigilant frame. They were not exercised about the holding of Christ still, with themselves and with others. Their best friend is taking his departure from their house, but they are in bed; and though they may coldly cry out of their beds to bid him stay, yet they do not rise up, and resolutely take hold of him, and say they are resolved not to part with him. But for them he may go, if he will, they are indifferent.

DOCTRINE I. Though the Lord be on his way to depart, yet he may be holden still.

DOCTRINE II. When the Lord is on his way to go, it is high time for people to stir up themselves to hold him still.

DOCTRINE III. Sometimes religion is at such a low ebb amongst a professing people, that Christ may even go his way, for any that is to hold him still.

DOCTRINE I. Though the Lord be on his way to depart, yet he may be holden still. To confirm this, consider,

1. It is pure love that brings Christ to a people or person, Deut. vii. 6—8; and such you know, may easily be holden still. What should have brought him out of heaven, but love to the inhabitants of the earth. His delights were with the children of men. Had he not enough in the hallelujahs of angels in the bosom of the Father, or was there any attracting object here below? No, surely. If he would have them home to be his spouse, he behoved to wash his filthy bride in his own blood, before she could set her foot within his Father's house. Now, if he took such a journey to come, will he not stay if he get entertainment.

2. He is unwilling to go away, when he is come, and therefore he may be holden still. This appears, if you consider: 1. That our Lord waits long upon poor sinners, if so be they will be so wise as receive him. "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." He waited one hundred and twenty years on the old world, in the days of Noah. He has waited long on Scotland, and yet he is not gone. He has waited at our doors on most of us, and he is still ready to embrace us. 2. Many times he enters on his way, and yet he turns back again, as if he could not obtain it of himself, to leave even a professing sinful generation, Hos. xi. 8, 9. How often did he leave the people of the Jews, before he parted with them altogether? Many good nights, is an evidence of unwillingness to go away. How often has he turned his back on Scotland, and yet come back again, even when he was almost out of sight; when we were ready to say, we shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living. How can it be thus? Truly Christ is not so bound to any land, but he may leave it altogether. Look to the Jews, the seven churches of Asia, and others. The reasons are:—There may be some hidden ones among them, so that he cannot leave a land altogether, till these be put out of harm's way Isa. lvii. 1, 2. Lot must be out of Sodom before it be destroyed. Again, there may be some chosen vessels in the loins of such a generation, as it was in the case of

that generation that came out of Egypt, with whom God bare forty years for their posterity's sake. He does it also for the glory of his patience. God will have it to be seen, that he delights in mercy, and that he does not execute his judgments on sinners, till they extort them out of his hands. Judgment is his strange act. *Finally*, God spares a wicked people, till the measure of their iniquity be filled up, and the cup be brim full, and then the last stroke comes, which compensates for its being so long a-coming, with the severity of it when it is come.

3. He gives frequent warning that he is going away ere he go; and why all that, but to stir up people to hold him still. Thus he warned the old world by Noah. Not a chop was laid on the ark, but it was a warning to them.

4. The breach never begins on his side, nor does he go while people are resolute to hold him still. See how he condescends to Abraham, Gen. xviii. 23—33; and how the Lord, by Paul and Barnabas, takes his leave of the Jews, Acts xiii. 46.

Finally, He has been holden still, when he was on his way to depart; and what has been, may be, Luke xxiv. 28, 29. The spouse, Song iii. 4. Jacob, Gen. xxxii. Moses, Exodus xxxii.

Use 1. If the Lord depart from us, then the blame lies at our door, for then he may be holden still. The case of this land is very dangerous, yet it is not hopeless. Our Lord is yet within a cry, within the reach of prayers. If he go, for want of serious invitation from us to stay still, we are inexcusable. Alas! that there are so few stirring up themselves to take hold of him. I must needs say, that the empty seats in this kirk, on the fast day, are no good sign either for the land or the parish. If sitting at home, or going about their own work that day, was a way to hold Christ still in the land, I am much mistaken. Surely, the people of Judah did not so much despise the fast proclaimed by Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 3, 4. But if these people did, with Esther, iv. 16, keep private fasts at home, when others were gathered for that work in the congregation, it will say much to clear them of contempt of the ecclesiastical and civil authority, calling them to fast and pray that day, and say that they were indeed concerned to hold Christ among us. And never more need to fast than at this day.

2. This may stir us up to wrestle with God for his stay amongst us, we may come to prevail. Where there is no hope of success there can be no vigorous endeavours; but a possibility of being successful in this very important matter, may engage us to exert ourselves. There is hope in Israel concerning this thing, Zeph. ii. 1—3.

DOCTRINE II. When the Lord is upon his way to go, it is high time for people to stir up themselves to hold him still.

I. I shall shew you when it may be said that the Lord is upon his way.

II. I shall shew what it is to take hold of Christ.

III. What it is to stir up ourselves to take hold of him.

IV. Give the reasons of the point. I am then,

I. To shew you when it may be said that the Lord is upon his way, and so when it is high time for us to stir up ourselves to hold him still. I shall do this, first, more generally, and then more particularly.

I. More generally, with respect to a land in which the Lord has set up his candlestick. The Lord is upon his way,

1. When people have plenty of gospel means, and yet remain unfruitful under them, Isa. v. 4—6; Heb. vi. 7, 8. The ox is near to the slaughter, when he has meat to the full laid before him to fatten him. If the Lord mind to lay the cities of Judah waste, he will send Isaiah to preach to them, and ripen them for that stroke. Alas! there is too great ground of fear, that this takes up a great part of the commission of the ministers of Scotland this day. That is an astonishing word: "And now also, the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire," Matth. iii. 10. "And now." Let us attend to this passage in its connection. O! what a people John had to preach to, and he was a burning and a shining light. The whole people flocked out to hear him preach, ver. 5. They would not loiter at home. They did not stand to undertake a long journey out of the cities, to the wilderness to hear him, ver. 1. They made open profession of repentance, ver. 6. They were admitted by him to the sacrament of baptism. Finally, they had their cases of conscience to propose to him, Luke iii. 10. But notwithstanding, says he, "Now is the axe laid to the root of the trees." It is with the gospel as with the sun, which sometimes gives a very fair blink a little before it set; and usually the greatest severity follows at the heels of the greatest mercy, of which that is a dreadful instance, 1 Thess. ii. 16. This may let us see that it is high time to stir up ourselves.

2. When people have been tried with many lighter rods, and have not been made better. Sodom got a stroke, Gen. xiv. but it did them no good, therefore came on them that fearful overthrow. When all means have been used to do good to all people, and yet have proved unsuccessful, the Lord is near to a departure. He then says of such, as he did of the fig-tree: "If it bear fruit, well; and

if not, then after that, thou shalt cut it down." Scotland hath got a little of various kinds of judgments, and yet what the better are we? He that was filthy, is filthy still.

3. When some of the pillars of a land fall, and others begin to fall. Good Josiah must be taken away in his young days, 2 Kings xxii. 20. Isaiah says, chap. lvii. 1, "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Luther, writing on this text saith, that the Lord, after his death, would bring great affliction on Germany. It so fell out, two years after his death. Noah was taken into the ark, and Lot out of Sodom, before the threatened destruction came. We are not without such sad prognostics. But then, when the remaining pillars fail, that finishes the business. It was a sad token, when Jonah was fast asleep in the ship. When the godly that remain are not fit to stand in the gap, but security steals upon them. Thus, while the bridegroom tarried, even the wise virgins slumbered. General security says wrath is at the door, "for when they shall say, peace and safety, then suddenly destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." The security of this generation is too palpable.

4. When the glory is gone the length of the threshhold of the temple, Ezek. ix. 3—5. When the shadows of the evening are stretched out, the night is fast hastening on. May we not say, where is the God of Elijah; and the servants may complain, as their Master did before them, "I have laboured," said he, "in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." Their own, and their people's dead-heartedness, often close up the door of utterance; and when that is opened, yet the door of entrance is mostly kept shut, unless it be to hew them by the prophets, and slay them by the words which come out of his mouth, or to dart in convictions upon people, who nevertheless run away with the arrows sticking in them, and at last get them out, and lick themselves whole again. We find this is sometimes the great part of ministers' work, Rev. xi. 10; and it is a sad sign that Christ and the gospel are upon the wing to depart. For within a while, the tormented hearers rejoice at the death of the tormenting preachers, that ripped up their sores, and would not let them sleep to death. This then should alarm us to rise up, and take hold of the Lord to keep him still, while the glory is yet on the threshhold; but should not encourage any to turn their backs on the ordinances, lest they be found not to follow after the Lord, but to run away before him.

II. More particularly.

1. When spiritual darkness is still upon the growing hand. Then may people say, Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the

shadows of the evening are stretched out. A child of light may be in darkness, even when the Lord is with him, Isa. l. 10; but then he is laying hold upon the Lord; but when darkness is growing, and the soul is at ease, God is on his way. Many get a wakening light, but it is not changing, therefore it decays by little and little, as the light after sunset, till it grow perfect darkness. But as in a dead body, when it begins to corrupt, there is a life and motion of another kind that succeeds, so there may be much seeming light swimming in the head, when the true light and sense of religion, in the power of it, is going away with all speed; Rev. iii. 1. 2. True light that affects the heart, is troublesome and a burden, but empty knowledge puffs up and seems to give a name. Oh! is not the sun of many like to go down at noonday? Is there not a strangeness crept in betwixt Christ and them? Is not the Bible a sealed book to many? O stir up yourselves to take hold of the Lord, lest if you delay, it turn dark night upon you. The nearer it is to night, the traveller should mend his pace, lest the darkness overtake him.

2. When people come to the meeting place, time after time, but see not God's face, nor hear his voice, then he is on his way, for his back is turned. "They shall go," says the prophet, "with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them." The Lord does with many professors for their fearful backslidings in heart and life, as David did with Absalom when he allowed him to come to Jerusalem, but not to see the king's face. Withdrawing makes way for departing. It is high time then to stir up yourselves to take hold of Christ, lest if you delay, he be, ere long, out of your reach, so as you shall not be able to overtake him. This was the case with the spouse, Song v. 6—8.

3. When people are spiritually always growing weaker and weaker. God was on his way from Sardis, when the things that remained in them were ready to die. When the Lord draws near to the soul, he comes with strength. He strengthens his people with strength in the soul. This is the case with many in our day, the longer they live, the weaker they grow, and their corruptions grow stronger as nails grow in decaying bodies. They are as Jerusalem, sighing and going backwards. O stir up yourselves to take hold of him, lest you be, ere long, like Samson without his hair, even weak as other men. It is time to take a firm hold of Christ, when our talents are come down to one, and to be trading diligently with heaven, lest we be brought to beggary. Prov. vi. 10, 11. It is time to cherish the fire when it is come to a spark hid among the ashes.

4. When people have forsaken the Lord, and are going on in a course of gading after their idols, Psal. lxxviii. 57—60. Who can live with an adulterous wife, that will not give over her strange lovers? Ezek. vi. 9. This is a horrid indignity with which God will not bear, Jerem. ii. 31—37. Alas, it is the case of many, their idols have stolen away their hearts. They have set up their idols of jealousy in which they delight more than in the Lord himself.

Arise now and lay hold on him quickly, lest after your idols have ruined you, and you go to seek help of the Lord, you meet with that, Go to the gods which you have chosen; and lest you be left at length as Michal, with an image in the bed instead of your husband.

5. When peoples' gifts being blasted, are withering and decaying. When the Lord had a mind to leave Saul, he took the spirit of government from him. It is a dreadful word. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Alas, it is sad, when people cannot so much as exercise a gift but before others, where they have the wind of praise to fill their sails. A dead body will be warm, while it is laid before a fire, and others may be chafing and rubbing it; but when it is laid by alone, its heat departs, for it has no inward principle of motion. Follow many to their secret devotions, and it will be seen that it is custom and not conscience that draws them thither. How hardly can they get a while of an hour, or a very short space from the world, and then it is huddled over, that they may be eased of the burden. Though the eyes be shut, yet they see a thousand vanities; the heart leaves the tongue, and there is so little vital heat within, that the word dies in their mouths. In a word, there is nothing in them of real value. It is high time then, for such to stir up themselves to take hold of him, if so be there may be hope, for surely he is then on his way.

Lastly, When the Lord, after many strugglings in vain with a soul, makes some strong, though short-lived impressions on the heart, that somewhat rouseth the man out of his lethargy. The Lord does with souls as men that have no will to go away, though they have knocked long, and yet have got no access; at the last they give some loud knocks, that if possible they may get access, and if not they will go their way. O! it is dangerous to be sleeping now, and to disobey Christ's voice. Luke xiii. 8, 9. Hosea xiii. 13.

Now is the nick of time. Strike the iron while it is hot. If you let it cool, it will be out of time. Bestir yourselves then, lest he depart from you, never to return. Miss that, and it may be the wind never blow again for transporting you to Emmanuel's land.

O! it is hard to tell what may be the Lord's last farewell to your souls, what may be the parting word, the parting conviction. Only we know that his Spirit will not always strive with men. Perhaps it may come to that this day with some. Now or never. Their salvation or damnation may be sealed. If you have not hold of him now, next may come that oath: "They shall not enter into my rest." We proceed,

II. To shew what it is to take hold of Christ. He is now in heaven, with respect to his bodily presence, and so there is no reaching him with the hands of the body; and though there were, it would be to little purpose. "For it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." It is then a spiritual hold we ought to take of him. Now there is a three-fold arm which we should clasp about our Lord, to hold him still.

1. The arms of faith. Faith is the hand of the soul, which first and last takes hold of Christ, and it is a very prevailing grace. Hence, Jesus said unto the woman of Canaan, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." An unbeliever cannot hold Christ, more than one that wants hands. Faith embraces Christ; it embraces the person of Christ. Hence it is said, "As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Christ, in the gospel, is offered to sinners in spiritual marriage. The daughter of Sion, especially when she sees him like to go away, puts off all delays, and says, "Even so I take him," and thus is united to him, and carries him into the secret chamber of her heart, not to sojourn, but to dwell there. "That Christ," says Paul, "may dwell in your hearts by faith." This is a noble way to hold Christ, for it is the keeping at the door that puts him away. Again, faith holds Christ by his word of promise, and it is a sure hold which a soul gets of him this way. Christ will not draw back of his word. Sometimes we have but a loose hold of men, when we have them only by their word, for they can do with it as Joseph with his mantle; but Christ will not do so, for he will not suffer his faithfulness to fail. The covenant is a bundle of promises, broad and wide enough, so as his people may get something to hold. And O! but it is a promising sight when Christ is going away, to see all his people running after him, and hanging by his chariot to hold him still. This, says he, will not drive far.

Faith also holds fast the tokens of Christ's love. Faith does with an angry God and a departing Christ, as Tamar did with Judah, Gen. xxxviii. 25. When lovers are to part for good and all, they will require up their tokens; but the party that is unwilling the

bargain should break up, will hold fast these. Faith can manage former experience in a dark hour, to the holding of Christ still, and can cast in its memorials to the court of heaven for favour. "Remember," say they, "thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this Mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt."

2. The arms of love, Luke xxiv. 29—32. They that will not love Christ, pretend what they will, they would even let him go without a good night. They that love their lusts, hate the Lord, and if they could get it done with their honesty, would entreat him to depart out of our coasts. But love cleaves to Christ. Love hath cords that bind to him. Love doth two things to hold Christ still. Love awakened, flees after the Lord; even as a child who is taken up with pictures, yet when the mother goes away, follows after, weeping, Song v. 4; vi. 2, 3. Love tells Christ, the soul cannot part with him, but if he goes, he must not leave the soul, but take it with him. The house is empty when Christ is not there.

Love holds the heart of Christ, and its hold is very strong. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." It is as death, that draws all to it, and holds all till a pull of omnipotency draw back its prey. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Love says to Christ, as Ruth to Naomi, "entreat me not to leave thee." It is an overcoming grace.

3. The arms of prayer. A praying people are the horsemen and chariots of Israel. Luther used to call the prayers of the godly his great ordnance. When Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and when he let it down, Amalek prevailed. It is a sad sight when the master of a family is turning his back to leave his habitation; but yet there is hope when all the children are hanging about him, and beseeching him to stay. Thus Jacob had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him; he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us. Prayer has done great things, and were there a spirit of prayer poured out on this land this day, what a blessed change would it make in the state of affairs. We find one Abraham getting all his requests for a very wicked people, Gen. xviii. One Lot, saving a whole city, Gen. xix. 20. The prayers of Jacob staying the hands of Esau, Gen. xxxii. 10, 11, 12. The prayers of the church breaking open prison doors, making chains fall off, and an iron gate to fly open, Acts xii. 6—10.

Prayer is pleasant melody in our Lord's ears, Song ii. 14, and arrests a departing God. The prayers of the saints are sweet

odours. The words of a lisping child will go very far with a tender-hearted father, but not so far as prayers do with God. Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him.

Prayer entertains Christ with savoury discourse. It is very usual to keep up discourse with them we would fain have to stay, and so to prevail with them; this cannot but prevail here, for our Lord, when he goes, gets always the last word.

Prayer puts employment in Christ's hand, and so holds him still, Song iii. 4. For he will not go while sinners have any employment for him. But it is not every sort of prayer that will do this. It is not the gift but the spirit of prayer. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man, availeth much. Many may pray, who will do no more good with prayers, than the heathen mariners in the ship with Jonah. A sigh, or groan, or broken sentence from the spirit of prayer, will do more good than ten thousand prayers of another sort. Strange fire is not fit for the mercy-seat, but holy fire taken from the altar will ascend with acceptance.

We are now, III. To shew what it is to stir up ourselves to take hold of Christ.

1. It imports a man's discerning of the signs of the Lord's departure and noticing the same. The want of this is reproved by our Lord. "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times." Every rod has a voice, but it is the man of wisdom only that hears it. Men will never deny themselves to their ease, till they see the hazard of security; Heb. xi. 7. If the fire has fastened on a man's bed, and he neither feel the heat nor see the smoke, he will not rise up. Alas! many are so spiritually senseless, they know neither Christ's goings nor comings. Hence, they never awaken, till, with the rich man in hell, they lift up their eyes.

2. Vigorous endeavours for the truth of grace in the heart, which is the only thing that makes a man capable of holding Christ still. A dead man can do nothing but lie and rot in the grave. He that hath a spark at home, may blow it up; but where there is not a spark, fire must be brought in, if he would entertain his guest. Alas! many overlook this, and so lose all their pains. They endeavour to perform duties, but neither for nor from grace. What serves a prayer that Christ may abide with us, if there be not grace in the heart to entertain and hold him? The want of grace in the heart makes all our attainments vain and fruitless: they still leave the soul in the same state of condemnation and enmity to God as before. For all duties of that sort, as they cannot atone for one sin, so they cannot mortify one lust, only grace can do it. The want of

grace, also, makes our attempts but faint and languishing, so that at last they are ready to give over. Duties never flow freely from that soul, where grace is not as a fountain to supply them. A lamp quickly goes out, when the oil is exhausted. "Will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty? Will he call upon God always?"

Objection. But can we work grace in ourselves? Answer. Though we cannot sow the seed, we may prepare the ground, Jer. iv. 3. We may examine ourselves, and see the want of it, and that we are undone without it; and we may take no rest to ourselves, nor give the Lord any, till we get grace; and when we are doing this, which we can do, God may do what we cannot do for ourselves. And if we do not do this, we will be damned, not only for the want of grace, but for the contempt of it, that we would not stir up ourselves to get it: and it will be a worm in our conscience, that we did not do what we might have done to have got grace, and so have got Christ. But that you began your work at the wrong end, because that was easiest, though not safest. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it."

3. A vigorous exercise of grace, received in order to take hold of Christ. A sleeping man is unfit to hold one that is going away, as well as a dead man. Sleeping prayers and faint wishes will not suffice. Yet, alas! these are all that Christ can get at this day from many that have the root of grace in them. They have hands indeed, but alas they are in their bosom, and it giveth them pain to pluck them out. If there be any stirring up of themselves, their love is burning, and cannot part with him, their faith is resolute, and will not quit their hold, so that if he go he must drag them after him; their love cannot bear his frowns, their faith will plead kindness on him, Isa. lxiii. 15, 16.

Lastly, A patient, though resolute wrestling with him for his stay, Gen. xxxii. 26. It must be patient continuance in well doing that God will regard. Many under a rod, will pretend to wrestle with God, but if that be removed, they give over, though the Lord be still as angry as ever. But the saints persevere in patient wrestling. "Mine eye," says the prophet, "trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven." We are now,

IV. To give reasons of the point. When the Lord is on his way, it is surely high time for us to stir up ourselves, to take hold of him.

1. Because then it is evident the Lord is angry, and is it time to be sleeping when the fire of the Lord's anger is kindled? The Lion hath roared, who will not fear. The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophecy. Are we able to run away from it? or to abide it?

No, no. God is saying to us this day, as Moses to Aaron, "Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly into the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord: the plague is begun." Sleep a while, and the house may be on fire about your ears, and no escape left by door or window, therefore "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

2. Because then, the Lord has begun to resent the entertainment that sinners have given him, and surely it is high time for us then to begin to mend. Our Lord, after a long and dark day, has returned to Scotland, and for many years hath kept house in it, furnished with the rich provision of the gospel. If there be some who weep, that the glory of the latter house is not so great as that of the former, suffer them to rejoice, who never saw such a glorious one; and also to weep, for that he has come to his own and his own received him not, and for that he seems now to be resenting the harsh treatment he hath received, Matth. xxiii. 37, 38.

3. Because when the Lord is on his way, judgment is at the door, when the glory is on the threshold, the bloody commission is a giving out, Ezek. ix. 3—5. As Christ goes, wrath comes on a person or people. "Woe also unto them, when I depart from them, saith the Lord." If we part with him, our happy days are done. There are many complaints this day, but I am afraid they will increase and not diminish, if the frame and temper of this generation be not changed. It will be a wonder if, for the slighting of the white horse of the gospel and his glorious rider, we turn not red, black and pale, ere all be done. If the gospel go, it is like that more will go with it, 2 Chron. xv. 3—6.

4. Because, if we do not then stir up ourselves, he may, ere long, be out of our reach. Christ may come to retaliate upon those who slight him, Prov. i. 24—33. His spirit will not always strive with us. Thou hast an offer of Christ to-day, but the world cannot assure thee that thou shalt have another to-morrow. But some may say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the father's fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Well, the threatened tree stands long in the wood, but it is cut down at last. The pulse beats oft in the body in the time of life, but the last pulse comes at length. Our breath, like a stranger, goes oft to the door, yet comes back again, but at last it goes, and returns no more.

Now, to shew you the necessity of stirring up ourselves in order to take hold of Christ effectually, Consider,

1. That our ordinary frame will not do here. We must rouse up, if we would take hold of him to purpose; for it was never yet known that sleeping prayers had much power to hold Christ, Song iii. 1. Seeking that is not striving, will be seeking in vain. "Strive," says our Saviour, "to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." A soul besotted with spiritual sloth will let Christ, Heaven, and all the benefits of the gospel, slip through his fingers, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags. People may lie in their bed and wish for heaven, and carry their wishes to hell with them; but if we would hold Christ, we must up and offer violence to heaven.

2. It is a difficult work we have to do. The fire that is almost extinguished, is difficult to kindle; and when Christ has turned his back, it is likely to be hard work ere people see his face again, Song v. 6. What a hard morning's work had Jacob of it, when he wrestled with him till the breaking of the day. It seems, also, that it was not easy for the disciples to hold him; for it is said, they constrained him, saying, abide with us. It must be hard work, for it is heart ~~hard~~ work. Religion exists inwardly, and the heart must be brought to it, or it will not do; and if you do not think heart work hard work, you have never tried it. O it is easy to say a prayer but to get the heart to cling to Christ by faith, love, and the spirit of prayer, is not so easy.

It is work in which you will have all to undo again, that you have done, which has provoked him to go away. Sinner! what hast thou been doing, but as it were thrusting Christ to the door? Thou hast been weaving thy life into a net to entangle thy feet; and building up a wall of partition, broad and high, betwixt him and thee, setting up idols of jealousy in every corner, to make the Son of God fain to remove and leave thee to thy lusts. Would you hold him then, you must open out the net to disentangle thy feet, pull down every stone you have laid, and take every one of these idols and sacrifice them to his jealousy. And if this be work for a sluggard, judge ye?

He who has got Christ and you asunder, will strive to keep you so, even the devil. Sad experience confirms this. How oft are some convinced and resolved to stir up themselves. But then hell is alarmed, and the devil endeavours to get all quiet again. "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, and a little folding of the hands to sleep." Hence it is, that the goodness of many is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away. Satan is Christ's rival, and will strive to keep his ground.

USE. It is then high time now to awake out of sleep, and take

hold on Christ, to keep him still. All the signs of departure before named, agree to us. O then up now, take hold of him, keep him fast, and protest against his departure. There are three things, in respect of which, you should be concerned to hold Christ still.

1. Be concerned for Christ's abode in the land, that the gospel be not removed, the pure ordinances be not taken away, 1 Sam. iv. 13. That Christ do not remove his tent from Scotland as from Shilo. If the gospel go, what will become of us? a land of darkness is uncomfortable. We have no security for enjoying the gospel. Pity your own souls, the souls of others and posterity. Let not Christ go, as you would not imbrue your hands in the blood of the souls of them yet unborn.

2. Be concerned for Christ's presence in the ordinances. Oh! it is monstrous for the children to be unconcerned for Christ's presence in their mother's house, where they were born, and where ordinarily they are fed. Be concerned for his convincing presence. When the sun shines into a house, the motes appear. When the sword of the word is in Christ's own hand, it is then quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. When Christ comes to ordinances by his word in the mouth of his servants, he opens the volume of a man's conversation, and reads to him the secret history of his heart and life. The man is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. O what a valuable thing is this! but if Satan can, he will keep people out of the way of it.

Be concerned for his converting presence. Acts ii. 37. Christ in the gospel, hath a drawing, overcoming power. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." When Christ comes in this way, mountains are levelled and hills become a plain. When he mounts his triumphal chariot, he will make rebels lacquey at his feet. "For his arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under him." Alas, that there is so little of this with us.

Be concerned for his quickening presence. He brings life and liveliness with him to sleepy decaying Christians. "This is my comfort in my affliction," says David, "for thy word hath quickened me." The sun ariseth, and man goeth to work. His presence makes the bread of life nourishing indeed, strengthening the soul for duty. Honour and majesty are before him, strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Then it comforts his people under

their griefs, and with joy they draw water out of the wells of salvation. It elevates the soul in the exercise of grace, looses bands, dispels doubts, and makes them hold on their way heavenward rejoicing.

3. Be concerned for Christ's presence with your own souls. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that your souls may be a little sanctuary for the Holy Ghost, and a throne for the Mediator. The soul without Christ, is but a dead soul in a living body. The want of it makes a soul barren, heartless and lifeless. There is never an empty heart amongst us. If Christ be not there, Satan is there. If it be not a palace for the King of glory, it is a den of hellish thieves, and a garrison for the devil where the strong man armed keeps the house and his goods are safe. Now to stir you up,

MOTIVE 1. The neglect of this is the need-nail that holds all other evils about us fast. Take that away, the rest will go. Though all as an unclean thing, yet we should be made pure and holy, get a perfect righteousness, revive as the corn, grow as the vine, and send forth our roots as Lebanon. Chrst has all in hand, grace and glory, so that taking hold of him is the short way to all other benefits.

2. It is a horrid indignity done to the Son of God, and says in effect, that his presence is not worth our pains to seek it. Ye have said, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord." That we can live well enough without him. "Wherefore say my people, we are Lords: we will come no more unto thee." Yea, that we are the worse for his presence, and would gladly be free of him. Therefore, they say unto God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Like the Gadarenes, who thought they could not get their swine kept for him, and therefore besought him to depart out of their coasts. This was the sin of the Israelites, Psal. cvi. 21—26.

3. It is next step to Christ's taking farewell of a people or a soul. He must needs go when there is none to hold him still, Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12. Oh it is a sad parting. Yea, woe also to them when I depart from them. Farther application afterwards.

DOCTRINE III. Sometimes religion is at such a low ebb, and spiritual sloth so prevails among a professing people, that Christ may even go away for any that is to hold him still. There is none that stirreth up himself. At what a low ebb was religion in Jerusalem, Jer. v. 1; Ezek. xxii. 30.

I. I shall inquire whence this proceeds, and discover the sources of this woeful temper, that men stir not up themselves, &c.

1. It proceeds from love to carnal ease. Christ's own spouse is sometimes so bewitched with this, that if sleeping prayers will not hold Christ still, she will even let him go his way, ere she be at the pains to rise up and set her foot on cold ground, Song v. 3. Every one has a devil's agent within him that says, master, spare thyself. This love to carnal ease, makes the man avoid what is necessary for stirring him up. There are these two things very necessary for the restoring of a decayed soul, which love to carnal ease will by no means admit.

These are,

1. The duty of self-examination. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Communing with our hearts, respecting our state and frame, is necessary. But this is a yoke which the delicate soul that loves ease cannot stoop to take on. They will pray, hear, and the like, for they may do these, stretched on the bed of sloth, but self-examination will disturb their ease.

The duty of secret prayer and fasting is also necessary, Matth. xvii. 21. This has been the way by which many have got a recovery; but it is to be feared it is an exercise few are acquainted with, Matth. vi. 16—18. When there is a decay on men's spirits, which spurns all other means, this ought to be tried; and none ought to say, they have not time; for some have their time in their own hand by day, and all have the night, and a night taken from sleep for this exercise, would be well bestowed. But love of ease, keeps away from this uneasy work.

2. It proceeds from abundance of world's ease. The Jews at Babylon, how zealous, Psal. cxxxvii. But at Jerusalem, how negligent and slothful, Hag. i. 2. Jacob may indeed sleep when he has a stone for his pillow, but much more when on a soft bed. The late troublous times kept people awake. When they had no rest to themselves, they gave God no rest; but now they have got rest, and find it is sweet, and it grieveth them to pluck their hands out of their bosom.

It is observable that people are very ready to fall asleep after a deliverance. It then comes to them sweet, as to a labouring man. This was the case with Noah, after the deluge; Lot, after his deliverance from Sodom, and Hezekiah, after his recovery. Compare also, Gen. xxviii. 20, with Gen. xxxv. 1, and downwards.

3. Plenty of the means of grace abused. People would think, that those that have plenty of ordinances, should be most lively; but indeed it turns ofttimes quite otherwise. The preached gospel; it is a pleasant song, which if it do not draw peoples' hearts after Christ it will lull them fast asleep, Isaiah vi. 10. The continual noise of

many waters, is apt to make people deaf. A man that has enough, if he have not all the better appetite, is seldom hungry, and thus men begin to weary of God and his ordinances. The honey comb is loathed, and they must be fed with something that please their fancy. Hence the power of religion is much injured. How many are, that would sometime ago, have gone many miles to hear the word of the Lord,when it was a scarce commodity, that will sit at home and loiter away the Sabbath, now when it is come to their doors. They have even got a surfeit of it; they are full and the bones must have rest.

4. The cares of the world, Luke xxi. 34. Many, while they are young and without care of the world, how lively and sprightly seem they to be; but when once they get a family, their religion melts away like snow before the sun. From that time many draw back. Hence, so many young saints, become old sinners. It is men's being so much taken up with the things of the world, that ruins the concerns of the soul. Cares of the world make men spiritually poor.

5. A view of unrepented of guilt, which is not so strong as to rouse men up, yet it lightly startles them. I believe one main cause of sin's not stirring up men, is, they are so far run on in the score, that they dare not take a serious view of their accounts, which is a kind of sullen despair, Jer. ii. 25.

6. A sinful want of the influences of divine grace, without which, a man can do nothing. Many have sinned away the influences of the spirit, so as they have neither heart nor hand in religion, as they have had, and that by their former grieving of the spirit. Days have been, when the Lord has been giving them one awakening after another, but they would needs sleep, and the Lord hath said, " they are joined to their idols, let them alone. "

7. Love to some bosom lust, which they are unwilling to give up. As long as a man minds to keep the sweet morsel under his tongue, he will not stir up himself to take hold of Christ; for he knows if he take hold of Christ, he must let go his idol. When people's hearts have gone away from Christ, then they have always some other pillow upon which to lean their heads and take their rest. Often they never awaken till the Lord draw the bolster from under their head, as he took away Jonah's gourd, Ezek. xxiv. 25.

Lastly, what wonder men stir not up themselves, for Satan will see to it that the curtains be drawn, all kept quiet, and that they be kept warm in the bed of sloth. The curtains are drawn on many, and the light kept out of their eyes. " But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the

glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Light is an enemy to sleep, but the sun may go down at noon with some. If the man can be brought to slight ordinances, and sit at home, it is well, what the eye sees the heart rues not. If he will come to ordinances, and his case be there spoken to, then Satan is at work, either to make him drowsy, or to send away his heart to be thinking on some other thing, or to put the word away from himself to some other person. And if the word continue to be so troublesome to him, he may even come to turn his back on it altogether, and hate the messenger because he never speakes good of him.

All noise that may disturb them, is carefully kept out of their ears. Conscience is a great disturber of false peace, and therefore it is either boasted or bribed to hold its peace. The consciences of some are boasted to silence, seared as with a hot iron, so that its speech is laid, 1 Tim. iv. 2. And this especially by sinning over the belly of light, and by custom in sin, which quickly wears away all sense, so as a man can sin without remorse. The consciences of others are bribed to hold their peace, and there are three things by which it is bribed to hold peace, and allow them to sleep.

1. With some good duties, even the easy duties of religion, as to wrong no man, to attend to ordinances, to recommend themselves to God while they put off or on their clothes, to say a prayer and give a sigh while they are going backwards, Hos. x. 11; Prov. vii. 14. We have heard of night-walkers, who rise out of their beds, climb up on dangerous places; people are unwilling to awaken them, but let them alone, they will go to bed again. Many such night-walkers there are in religion, who will do some duties as if they were awake, and yet are fast asleep.

2. Abstaining from gross sins which cannot but wound the conscience, Luke xviii. 11. They on whom is the spirit of slumber, will sleep in any place where there is nothing to prick them; like children, who will wallow among the dust, building their sand hillocks, till the wind blow it in their eyes. A roaring devil would awaken some, and therefore Satan transforms himself into an angel of light.

3. Fair promises to be performed afterwards, if conscience begin to mutter. "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." The man does with conscience, as the lazy man does with his friend that comes too early to him, engages to meet him afterwards; and also many make an engagement with their conscience that they never keep. However, the making of the engagement frees them from present disturbance.

Finally, They are well covered. "Woe to the rebellious children,

saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin." There is a threefold covering under which men take a sound sleep. 1. A covering of pure mercy, that hath no affinity with justice. The mercy with which the Spirit of God covers his people, has red lines of justice in it, drawn with the blood of Christ, in whom the soul is careful to have an interest, Psalm lxxxv. 9, 10. Ask many how they think to be saved? They look for mercy. Why? God is merciful. Tell them no mercy out of Christ, they yield it; but believe it not, for they are at no pains to be in him. 2. A covering of much time to come, in which they wrap themselves, and continue at ease; as when a man is on a journey, he can sleep by the way when he thinks he has much day before his hand. 3. A covering of sufficient grace, which in effect is sufficient delusion. Two sorts sleep soundly under this; first, some that can take their swing in their lusts now, and think it is but to repent and believe, and they can do that afterwards, if it were on a death-bed. There are, secondly, some that think the bitterness of death is past. They have good desires, and that is enough to secure heaven. So they are like the unthrifty tradesman, who is not greedy of wealth, thinking he has as much as will be a livelihood, he will not exert himself for more, but take his ease. Now this is an easy sort of religion. Though a man cannot work, he can lie and wish upon his bed, for a Christ, a pardon, and heaven. But woe to these desires, they will be found a covering not of God's Spirit, but of men's own spirit. "The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour." Thus many lay down the conclusion, that the main work is already done, so they take ease. This serves many as a bulwark against all the attempts which the gospel can make on them. Is your salvation your main work? Yet at most it is but a begun work, therefore work out your salvation with fear and trembling. The Spirit of God's reasoning is, the nearer salvation is, it is so much the more high time to awake out of sleep, Rom. xiii. 11. But what do you with the work of glorifying God, man's chief end. It is a shrewd sign, salvation is far from the man, that has nothing to do with grace, but to secure his own salvation.

Use I. Of lamentation over the low degree to which religion is come in this generation. We may well take up our lamentation and say our silver is become dross. The tokens of the Lord's anger are gone out against us. Christ is on his way to leave us, the plague is begun, the ark is like to be taken, but where is the man that stirreth up himself to take hold of the Lord; or that is fit to stand in the gap. Jerusalem is sighing and going backwards. The Lord is

angry with our mother, threatening to give up house with her, but the children generally are sleeping. Ah! we have fallen! fallen! Once a noble vine, but now the plant of a degenerate vine. Wickedness is at a height, and religion is at a low ebb. Most of us are pulling down the house about our ears. Few, very few, to hold it up. The floods are like to swallow up the ship, but Jonah is fast asleep. We shall here, *First*, give evidences of this case; and *Secondly*, shew the evil of it.

I. Let us give evidences of the low degree to which religion is come in our day: and that the text is too applicable to us. "There is none that stirreth up himself," &c.

1. The gross wickedness that doth this day abound in our land in the face of the sun, in a land where there is so much gospel light, Hos. iv. 1—3. That drunkenness, swearing, whoring, profaning the sabbath, contempt of the gospel, and such heaven-daring abominations, abound among high and low, is very evident. How rare to find a great man good. Profanity goes with many of them for a piece of gallantry, who by their profanity put themselves as far below the brutes, as God in his providence has lifted them up above other men. If a man has any sense of religon, he is judged to have been foundered in his education. No wonder the church of God has received bad treatment from such persons and others, whose religion will go no farther than their carnal interest. The meaner sort write as they can after their copy, and eagerly embrace profane causes, as they have temptations thereto, Jer. v. 1—6. If God confound them not in their counsels, ruin them not by their own devices, and return not their way upon their own head, we shall mark it as a miracle of providence. It is not long since a heavy judgment was inflicted upon the meaner sort of people, but there is reason to look, that God will destroy both head and tail at once.

2. Is not the profane spirit of the Gadarenes, gone far through the land? Men in effect saying to the Almighty, depart out of our coasts. There are many in Scotland grudging and fretting to see the Lord covering a table for us, and that would be glad Christ had not a foot of ground in the land, but hill sides and scaffolds. They are longing to see the ways of Zion mourning desolate, and to hear the word given to return back to Egypt.

3. A profane spirit of neutrality and indifferency carries away many. They are like Gallio, care for none of these things. If they get the world, their clay god in their arms, they care not what side be uppermost, whether the gospel sink or swim. They are wholly careless that way, and behave as if they were all flesh, as if their souls were but salt to keep their bodies a while from corruption. As for

Christ, they know not him nor his favour, and therefore he may go if he will for them. They never got any good by his presence, no wonder they are not concerned at the hazard of his departure.

4. The dumb devil that possesseth many hearts and families. If a Turk were in the houses of some Christians, saw them in their families and in their closets too, he would have much difficulty to know what religion they were of, or whether they had a God or not, unless it were by their swearing, or mumbling over a grace to their meat. Some make no conscience of prayer in their families, Jer. x. 25. Some perhaps will pray occasionally in their families, or join therein, but live strangers to secret prayer; these are careless daughters. I never like that religion where people have nothing to tell Christ, but what they can say before others. It is not very like that these are married to Christ. Now, lay aside all these, and there will not be very many behind to take hold of Christ. But we will come a little closer, and sift more narrowly; and I believe, ere we have done, if conviction can get entrance, we will see the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

1. How many praying persons are there in our day, who, though they have received Christ into their mouths and houses, yet not into their hearts; but are still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. As for some, their practice openly contradicts their profession. They will swear and lie, and cheat and pray, and so wound religion. It will never be the like of these that will hold Christ still, if they do not reform, Isa. i. 11—15. Others that are blameless, yet never get beyond a form of godliness, but remain strangers to the inward life of religion.

2. People confining themselves to morning and evening prayer, though God puts other opportunities in their hands. A healthy man keeps at his ordinary meals, but the sickly person that has much to do with the physician, cannot do so. Were people in the thriving, and exercised unto godliness, they would readily find an errand to God in the intervals. Alas! many are like Samson, they know not that the Lord is departed from them; and if they could not reach their knees with it, yet if they were waking, they would be often looking up by ejaculatory prayer.

3. The difficulty people have to get an errand to Christ, except what self-preservation teacheth them. They will pray for heaven, because they are afraid of hell; they will pray for pardon, but to tell Christ what ails them, except in fair generals, there is the difficulty. They that are thriving are not so. Exercised souls will have their particular cases lying near their hearts, and they must go to Christ with them. The case of their own souls will furnish them materials of prayer, in all its parts.

4. The merry life that many have of it all their days, except so much as is interrupted with crosses in the world, or some visible outbreaking, that wound their reputation. Men have their sullen dejected fits, but their sorrow is of the world. How few are walking mournfully under the hidings of God's face, prevailing of corruption, pride, and unbelief. Alas! these things are hid out of the view of many pretenders to religion, who feel nothing in their own eye, unless it be a beam. They reign as kings, without the shining of the Lord's countenance upon them. But were they really exercised to godliness, their wine would not escape being sometimes mixed with water.

5. Infrequency in reading or hearing the Scriptures read. Where is the man whose soul's case sends him away to the Bible, to see what he can get there for it? Souls that are awake, are readily thus employed. The Scriptures are Christ's last will, the magazine of Christian comfort, where there is what is suitable to the cases of our souls.

The saints turn to the Scriptures under deadness, saying, "This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me;" also under doubts and fears, saying, thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors. But alas! the dust of our Bibles may witness against many of us. It may long lie by us, ere our own case make us turn a leaf of it.

6. The little relish the Scriptures have with us. To the hungry every bitter thing is sweet. God has promised his Spirit to teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance. An awakened Christian reads the Scriptures with another eye than others do. They say with the two disciples, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures." An exercised frame of Spirit, is a good commentary on the Bible. It is like the sun shining on a lime wall, gets light and reflects it. But the Scriptures are to many a sealed book, tasteless as the white of an egg.

7. Unacquaintedness with answers of prayer, especially in spiritual things. Prayer is the exercise of those that are kept stirring and looking up to God, and disappointments are heavy to them. "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." It would be a confounding question to some, were they asked, if they ever had an answer to prayer in spiritual things; and hard for many to tell when they had the last answer of prayer. Ah! do we think that these prayers avail ought, that God hears not, or that these are heard, about which we are not concerned whether they be heard or not? Many are no better than Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15; and worse than he, in that we are not troubled about it.

8. The great love to the world and carnality, Phil. iii. 18, 19. We sit down on worldly enjoyments. It is good to be here. Many think of the world, what Peter said of being on the mount of transfiguration with Christ, and would make a bargain with God on lower terms. They would let him keep his heaven to himself, so that he would but secure them from his hell, and leave them in the world, to shift for themselves. Where is the man "that is coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon Christ his beloved?" And saying, "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also, that love his appearing."

9. The woeful misspending of the Sabbath day. The fourth commandment is put in the middle of the decalogue, with a "remember the Sabbath day," as being the bond of all religion. The growth of religion, or decay of it, goes hand in hand with the keeping, or neglecting of the Sabbath, Isa. lviii. 13, 14; Amos v. 8. But alas! if we take our mark by this, we may say religion is at a low ebb. Few sermons in the year serve some people, and little thing will make some turn their backs on them. If people would do with their meat, in which there is a mote, real or supposed, as they do with the ordinances, some would come quickly to the churchyard, that will not come to the church. Many spend much of the Lord's day in their beds, long in bed in the morning, and soon to it at night. Some companies by their discourse, might be thought to be going to a market, when coming to church. Betwixt sermons, how few go alone, to pray or meditate; and in company no spiritual discourse, but carnal, vain, idle talk, unfiting them for the rest of the work. In going home, no spiritual conversation. What they heard is buried, unless it be something they mind to quarrel or dispute about. At home, the day is as ill closed with many, as it was begun.

10. The little spiritual discourse that is, at any time, among professors. "Let no corrupt communication," says Paul, "proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." When Christian experiences are spoken by any, how little do they relish with others: It is an effectual way to silence some companies. How few have any thing to add. It is a mystery to many. A philosopher seeing a man with a fair face, and silent tongue, bade him speak, that he might see him. When scholars or merchants meet, their discourse tells what they are. Men of the same nation in foreign countries, speak their mother tongue to one another. Why not Christians?

Alas! religion is at a low ebb. Nearest the heart, nearest the mouth. When there is fire on the hearth, smoke will come out at the chimney. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

11. The little trouble ministers and fellow Christians get in our day, to solve doubts and cases of conscience, about matters concerning the state and case of the soul. This must be, either because people can guide all these concerns alone, and need no help; but often it has been seen, that they who could have helped others, have stood in need of help themselves, when the case became their own: or that people smother their exercises and cases, which is dangerous; or that they are not taken up about these matters. Indeed it is to be feared, the thing which makes many of us so easy is, either that we are sleeping or dead, and it is all one thing to such persons whether it be night or day; and therefore no asking of that question, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" It is to be feared, that many of us are as Samson, when "he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." I think we that are professors, have ground to propose that question, if it be so, why am I thus? So little exercised about our soul's state and case. I will guess at some reasons of it,

1. The truths of religion are speculatively known by many, but realized by very few, 1 Cor. ii. 14. It is one thing to know the grammatical construction of words and their meaning, another thing to see the things themselves expressed by these words. One man hears of the bitterness of gall, or speaks of it, and is not moved; another tastes it, and his whole body shivers. Were the truth of the being of a God, the nature and necessity of regeneration, holiness, and the like, realized unto us, it would be impossible for us to be so little taken up about these things as we are. Paul knew the law literally, but was not exercised about his case, till it was realized to him. "I was alive," says he, "without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Alas! God, heaven, and hell, are but lifeless speculations to most men.

2. The word heard is not mixed with faith of application, otherwise it would make some smart, Heb. iv. 2. Men having a soul ruining way of hearing. Hearing as if we were speaking to the man in the moon, so that we may say, "To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold their ears are uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken. Behold the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it." Alas!

many are like the sieve out of the water, they lose all. But God's word will at length take hold of them, that will not take hold of it, Zech. i. 6.

3. Many are very little at home, in the duty of self-examination. Some narrow spirits mind nothing but their own particular affairs; some are so taken up with the public, that matters at home, in their own breasts go to wreck. O! for the day, when what God has joined, men shall not dare to put asunder. Debt is a great burden to an honest heart, but some go lightly under it. Augustus hearing of one deeply in debt, who yet slept soundly, sent for his pillow, alleging there was some strange virtue in it. Want of consideration is a sleepy pillow indeed. If the sluggard manage the garden, bad weeds will get leave to grow. If there be no trial made, no wonder all pass for gold that glitters, and that bad wares go off in the dark.

4. People have some moonlight grace within, that will appear very good, if they take but a slight view of it. Men are not troubled with questions about their state and case. What is the reason? "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand?" Such are not disposed to rip up things to the quick. They find they have good meanings, good desires of Christ and grace, and upon these they can charge conscience to be quiet and back the charge, Matth. v. 6; 2 Cor. viii. 12. But it is not their work to know whether their former awakenings and present desires, be of the right stamp or not. Alas! that is verified in many, "the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing. The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour."

5. Religion is but a by-hand work to many. It is the real business of few. The many are drowned in the thick clay of the world. Their work is like the mole in the earth, that lifts not up its eyes till a-dying. If they mind their soul's case at any time, they take but a start of that work. Many have imbibed Pharaoh's cursed principle, that religion is a work only for them that has nothing else to do. Martha was troubled about many things, and these turn the attention away from the one thing needful. People will never prosper, till they make religion their business, and season their whole conversation with it.

6. Satan who is the cause of much inward trouble to some, suffers others to be unmolested, and that because they have nothing that is worth to lose, except their souls, and these are best catched, while the man is not exercised about his case. If a soul attain to communion with God, victory over corruption, sound evidences for

heaven, then Satan never lets them rest, but does every thing he can to disturb them. It is the rich ship which the pirate attacks, and the heavy purse which the robber tries to take.

7. Many never knew what true religion meant. Hence, like children, they please themselves with a bag full of counters, as if they were gold; "they think themselves rich, and increased in goods, and standing in need of nothing." When people know no other state, but that in which they are, it is little wonder they trouble not themselves about it. One bred a workman all his days, will go to his labour, his coarse fare, and cottage, contentedly; whereas one bred up in a palace, would take ill with it, and would weep, when the other would sing.

8. Unacquaintedness with the work of wrestling with God. There is a great difference betwixt prayers. God regards not every thing which men call prayer. "They have not," says he, "cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds." Few are like Jacob, or the woman of Canaan, Mark vii. 25, in urging their requests. Nay, our coldrife, lukewarm prayers say, that our life is almost gone, and that which remains is ready to die. We are now,

II. To shew the evil of this sleepy lazy temper of spirit.

1. It is far worse than it looks to be. It is like the locusts in the Revelations, "which had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions." People are not aware of the danger of it, and so it is most dangerous, for the evil of it is not so easily discerned as in other cases; it is but an omission, and an indisposition for spiritual things. The sting of it is concealed. It is looked on as an infirmity, which the best have; for while the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. It rests like a friend in the bosom, but is indeed a bosom enemy.

It comes not to an height in an instant, but creeps on by degrees, for it is the soul's sleep, which steals on at great leisure. First they grow heavy, then slumber, and then sleep, Deut. 10—18. Conscience is not silenced in an instant, and Satan carries on his designs best by degrees. He did not presently thrust the forbidden fruit into the mouths of our first parents; but first Eve must see it, then taste, then eat, and then give to her husband.

It is also a sweet sin. O but sleep is sweet! Meat is sweet, but people soon fill themselves with it; but they are not so soon satisfied with sleep. When a man can take no pleasure in any other thing, yet he can sleep. When people have lost all delight in God, in his word and ordinances, they can take pleasure in this lazy temper.

2. It is a temper of spirit most hateful to God. "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him." "I would," says Jesus, "thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." A prince would take it ill to be brought into a smoky house, and to have vinegar presented to him, instead of wine; so God abhors such a temper, and the services which proceed from it. God is a living God, and he cannot love but loathe dead inactive souls. Christ keeps no communion with such. They are in bed, the doors are shut, they cannot rise to let him in, therefore he goes away, Song v. 3, 6, for they prefer their ease to communion with him. With them it is heartless work, and therefore God cannot love it.

3. It is destructive to the soul, Prov. xxiv. 30—34. When men sleep, Satan will be sowing his tares, and so there may be a sowing in joy, which will be reaped in tears. The bands when laid on the soul, may be soft as wool, but as iron at the breaking them off, as in the case of David. It casts the gracious soul into a spiritual consumption, and graceless souls it stings to death. "By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands, the house droppeth through."

This temper murders convictions. It stifles the harbingers of the Lord of glory, and checks a good work in the bud, Acts xxiv. 25; Hos. vi. 4. It fares with many in this case, as with a sleepy man, who being oft called to arise, still falls asleep again, till the other depart from him. It also choaks many good resolutions. O what brave Christians would many of us have been, had we been what we resolved to be. But alas! this temper has made them like corn on the house tops, withered before it be grown; or like Rachel, beautiful, but barren. Conscience makes many resolve to amend, but spiritual laziness lets them not move a foot, for it cuts the sinews of all good endeavours, and makes men unfit both for doing and suffering. For *doing*. The Christian's work, is striving, fighting, wrestling, and running. But who will be fit to grapple with principalities and powers, corruptions and temptations, that stir not up themselves? This requires not only life but liveliness. It unfits also for suffering. For this the person is most unfit, because he loves ease, and nothing uneasy can be pleasing to him, Song v. 3. A suffering lot requires more than ordinary vigour, but the sleepy Christian has less. Its prevalence says we are unmeet for suffering. It says trials are coming on, but that the generation is very unfit for them.

4. It is a mother sin. It is both mother and nurse to other sins,

Prov. xxiv. 30, 31. It breeds other sins, as it did David's adultery. Look as death seizing on the body, breeds worms and corruption, so deadness on the soul doth produce noisome lusts. Whence is all that carnality, lightness, want of appetite after spiritual things, but from hence; they are the monstrous births of this womb. When once a man begins to awaken, these flee away; as the wind blowing, purgeth and purifieth the air. This temper not only produces but feeds them. Lusts thrive well in the heart under this temper. Satan says to it, as Pharaoh's daughter did to the mother of Moses, nurse that child for me. Hence how difficult is it to recover after men have been long lying on this sleepy pillow. If a man take his disease in time, it may be speedily cured; but let it run on, it will not be so easy. While Babel's children are yet but young, they may be dashed against the stones, but being grown up, they will be more difficult to destroy.

5. This lazy temper of spirit, is the strongest arm of the devil. It is one of his master pieces for the ruin of souls. What can he not do with people, when once he has them in this net? By it he can do two things: 1. He can draw people by it. As dyers give a dip in the blue vat to cloth, that it may the better take on black; so Satan makes use of this temper for drawing men into other sins. Let men once take a draught of this intoxicating cup, and they will dance after the devil's pipe, Prov. xxiii. 21. Thus he made Peter deny his master, and the spouse to give Christ his leave, Song v. 3, 4. Sometimes the man will be ready to say, Am I a dog to do this thing? Well, but if Satan get the man under this temper, he will soon make him do it. 2. As he draws them by this temper, so he holds them by it. By this means he holds fast his own. Has he a mind to bring them to rank poverty, this will do it. It will shut out the foolish virgins. How did Satan hold David by it, after he had fallen into adultery. The woman informs him, that the sin cannot be concealed, she is with child, 2 Sam. xi. 5. But Satan keeps the hold. David is not awakened yet; he falls on schemes still to hide his sin, sends for Uriah, bids him go to his house, and sends a mess of meat after him, fills him drunk, and at last murders him; and thus was he held till the Lord brake the arm that held him, and awakened him.

Lastly, It is that which Satan bends all his force to maintain, as being a main pillar of his kingdom. Art thou fallen into this lazy frame, Satan's net and power shall fail, if thou get not a sound sleep. He will do his utmost, ere people be disturbed, till his time come. It seems then, he has a time, when he will allow people to be awakened. Yes! a twofold time: 1. When he has got a man

over head and ears in some gross sins, that even a natural conscience will startle at. Then he will allow them to rub their eyes, put on their spectacles, that they may see the bloody sword of justice, hanging over their heads; and so may, in a fright, leap out of one hell into another; for sometimes Satan sets the house on fire about the lazy sinner, that the smoke awakening him, he may leap out of his bed into the fire, and perish in despair. Though sometimes the Lord plucks the brand out of the fire, yet, like David, they escape not without broken bones. Again, he permits them to awake, when death is come, and time gone. If it were possible any could be secure beyond the line of time, Satan would rather awaken them himself, than that they should sleep on. The tempter turns accuser and executioner. When time is gone, he knows there is no hazard in their awakening, Eccles. ix. 10. Hence, some sleep on till the last breath, and pass off like lambs, no bands in their death.

Use II. Of exhortation. Stir up yourselves to take hold of Christ. There is much need of this exhortation. O! that I could come to every man's bed side this day, and sound an alarm. I may take up the whole congregation in four classes. A word to each,

1. Some that never had any awakening, that had never a qualm of conscience to make them say, what have I done? but can bless God they have lived in good belief all their days. Like Moab, they have been at ease from their youth, and have settled on their lees. They have not so much as a form of godliness, but live in ignorance, and profanity, or what they call morality, and sleep soundly in the devil's arms. The danger of their souls never brake their rest by night or by day. And if they heard of any under soul exercise, would be ready to bless themselves from it, or count it melancholy fits.

Awaken, O! young and old sinners, before the pit shut its mouth upon ye, for you are sleeping the sleep of death. God forbid! will some say. Nay, others see the devil's mark on your foreheads, though you do not. Had you been born again, you would have had some pangs, some awakenings less or more, and would have been stirred up to mind your soul's case.

1. Consider that by nature thou art a child of the devil, and an heir of hell; under the wrath and curse of God for original sin, and thou hast been adding every moment to that treasure of sin, while God has been adding to the treasure of wrath. Thy soul got a wrong set by Adam's fall, and so could never to this day step one right step; but God has the account of them all to lay before thee at length, Deut. xxxii. 34; Rom. ii. 5. Wrath is hovering over thy head. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the

wrath of God abideth on him;" and thou art hanging over the pit's mouth, by the brittle thread of life.

Say not you have good hearts, for the heart is the worst part of you; "It is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Say not that you live an honest life in the world. "For an high look, and a proud heart, and the ploughing of the wicked is sin." Say not that you have good meanings and desires. "For the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." Say not that Christ is merciful, willing to save sinners; for he is not willing to save you in, but from, your sins. He is not willing to take dogs and swine to heaven. He cannot save you, unless you take hold of him by faith, Heb. xi. 6; and you will never do that unless you be awakened, Matth. ix. 12.

2. Thou hast never yet been brought the length of the first step to heaven. Esau, Felix, and Judas, were farther on than ever thou hast been; for they were awakened and convinced, and that is the first work, John xvi. 8.

3. The devil is the master of the household with thee. Till this day, his goods are at peace. Had the devil been cast out, he would not have quit his possession with so little noise, and they with whom he dwells now, shall dwell with him hereafter.

Lastly, Awaken now, or you will get a fearful awakening. "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings." O sinner, the house is on fire about thee, rise therefore, out of thy bed, and flee for thy life. Is it not time yet to mind thy soul? What breast plate hast thou got on, that the arrows of God's word cannot pierce thee? Your confidence seems to be strong. But remember Job xviii. 14; Isa. xxviii. 18; Deut xxix. 19, 20.

2. Those that sometimes have had an awakening, but now it is gone, and they are even where they were before, they are back to their old trade again. O sinner, did not God once awaken thee? Was thy conscience never alarmed? Are there not some who may mind, how God once took them to Mount Sinai, and caused them to hear the trumpet of the law? Perhaps at a sermon many years since, or on a sick bed, when death came to the bed side, and stared them in the face and filled them with horror of hell following at its back: they resolved never to be again as they had been before. But when the sermon was once gone out of their heads, or they recovered out of their sickness, they turned even the old men and women they were before. I would pose your consciences with a few questions.

1. When you had the awakening, would you not have given all the world to have that undone which you had done; that you had spent the time that was wasted in pursuit of your lusts in minding the concerns of your souls? Why then have you turned back? Did you not resolve for the time to come, that you would never be so unconcerned about your souls as you had been? What have you done with these resolutions now? Were you fools to make them, or fools to break them?

3. Did you think God's wrath against sin, and his threatenings, mere scarecrows to affright children? Why look you so on them now? Could you sleep sound this night if God should send you home with these arrows in your conscience again? Perhaps you are proof against these things now. But they had need of very strong armour, to ward off the blow, that have God for their opponent.

Lastly, Was not death very terrible then, in your case; and is the turning back to your old course, the way to make it pleasant now? Is there more sand in your glass now, than there was then? It may be farther from your mind, but it is surely nearer to your heels to overturn you, than it was then. Awaken now again, ere God awaken you in wrath. It had been better for you, if you had never had that awakening. "If I had not come, said Jesus, you had not had sin, but now you have no cloak for your sin," 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. The devil hath a surer hold of you than ever. It will be a wonder if you escape; "for he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Murdered convictions sometimes rise again when men are dying, and with horrible cries drive men into darkness.

3. Upsitten professors, of whom better things might be expected. Alas! many that have the root of the matter in them, are now under a decay; even Jonah is gone down into the sides of the ship. I have given several evidences of this. But further would you know it, try and find how the pulse of your affections beat in prayer, especially in secret, for in public people have many winds to fill their sails. Alas I fear if we view ourselves in the glass of our secret conversing with God, many of us will see ourselves so decayed as that nothing is left but skin and bone. Alas, what cold has benumbed our spiritual senses? Perhaps we are something before others, but in secret are as idols, that have eyes and see not, ears and hear not. Little heat of affection there, the body is placed on its knees before God, but the world gets away the heart. Though the eyes be shut, the man sees a thousand varieties. The heart, like a bird, gets out of the cage, and skips from bush to bush, wanders here and there. This argues a sad decay.

OBJECTION. These are but infirmities and little sins. ANSWER: Is it but a little sin to neglect him whom the angels adore? Would you turn about your back, speaking to a king? Be it so, what think you of the number of them? Grains of sand heaped together make a mountain; and I believe, these your little sins, sometimes make such a high mountain betwixt Christ and the soul, that the soul cannot meet with Christ in the duty, nor can its voice reach him. The bow will not shoot, unless it be bended, nor will the viol make melody, if the strings be not properly drawn. Prayer without fervour of spirit, is like a bird, whose nature is but to fly, but cannot, when its wings are clipped.

OBJECTION. It is hard to get the heart fixed. Indeed it is. But it is not impossible. David could say, "O God my heart is fixed." Were any of us under a sentence of death, and got access to the prince's chamber to petition for our life, we would not be gazing on the pictures hanging in the room. A man intent on his business in the world, hears not the first knock at his door for he is busy. O for an exchange of affections to get these which we give to the world, to give to God. The assaults of these wanderings we cannot hinder; but there is no necessity to entertain them. These wandering ghosts may knock at our door, but we need not open unless we please. We cannot hinder the birds to fly about our heads, yet we need not allow them to nestle in our hair. But O! what way shall a poor creature be kept from them. I can tell you no way how to be kept altogether free from their assaults, for I believe that is reserved for heaven. The devil is the father that begets them, corrupt nature brings them forth, and if unwatchfulness and laziness be there, it will nurse them. But it is the work of grace to starve them. But if they be not entertained they will not mar the success of our prayers, and therefore I would give you advice in that case.

1. Do as the builders of the wall of Jerusalem did, hold the trowel in the one hand, the sword in the other, that you may be ready both to build and to fight, to ward off these irregular motions of the heart.

2. If they do come on, do as Abraham did with the fowls that came on the sacrifice, drive them away. Refuse converse with them, and closely apply yourself to the work before you. The mind of man cannot be intent on two things at once.

3. Do as Samson who took meat out of the eater, and sweet out of the strong: turn them to an occasion of good, turn the cannon on corruption, and see if you can outshoot the devil with his own bow. There is a fourfold sweet may be extricated out of them by a gracious soul.

1. Humiliation of soul before the Lord. "So foolish was I and ignorant," says Asaph, "I was a beast before thee." The soul may therewith be filled with shame and blushing before the Lord. Dost thou find thy heart beginning to wander, turn thyself to the lamenting of the corruption, vanity and lightness of it. They are the nasty old friends of the bride, who beginning to draw about her while before the bridegroom, may well fill her face with blushing, and remind her of her father's house and her own people.

2. Sense of need. Many times people go to God, insensible of their needs, and so no wonder their hearts wander, like a man that goes to the market, wanting nothing, and so goeth gazing up and down. Well, turn this wandering deadness and darkness of heart; men may quicken their sense of need of help from Christ, and supplies of grace, Rom. vii. 21—24.

3. Importunity in prayer. These messengers from Satan should make us more importunate. The man going to the city of refuge, the nearer his heels the enemy is, he flees the faster, and knocks more rudely at the gates.

4. A desire of uninterrupted communication with God, and perfect freedom from that corrupt nature, that will needs draw a black score through the fairest line we can write, Rom. vii. 24; and thus the soul might be screwed up to heaven, and drawn from under the feet of these tyrants. Resolution would do this.

Now to return, our moth eaten duties, our prayers that are so run with these worms of our earthly hearts, shew, that there is little resistance made to them, and that we are upsitten very sore. And to awaken you, I would cry in your ears these following:

Cry. Jer. ii. 2, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown." O upsitten professors, decayed christians, God remembers the day when it was otherwise with you, when you could not have lived as you do now. Have you forgotten the days of your youth and the love of your espousals. Where is your wilderness love now? Is not Christ as good a master as he was? Are you offended that he has taken the iron yoke off your necks and laid meat before you? Is this your kindness to your friend?

2. Abner's cry to Joab: Shall the sword devour for ever? Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the end; how long shall it be then ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren? This case is sweet in the mouth, but it will be bitter in the belly. The awakening may be very harsh, by the blow of the Lord's hand, if his word do not it. There are two ways God has awakened sleepy professors.

1. By a dreadful storm of affliction. Thus Jonah and Joseph's brethren were awakened. The Lord will not let professors sleep on, but if the word will not do it, the sword may. We have reason to fear some of us are so fast asleep, that we will not awaken till we be roused up by the cry of ourselves or relations, weltering in blood.

Or, II. By letting them be plunged in the mire of some scandalous gross sin, as Peter; the bitterest way of all. Men keep up the body of religion, and that does before the world; but the soul of life is gone, and the Lord lets them so fall, as the world may be ready to judge they were never honest at the heart.

3. The midnight cry. "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him; or, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." The clouds are growing black above our heads. The Lord seems to be on his way, coming out of his place to punish us. The cup of these nations is filling very fast. It is high time to awake. It is not good furniture for an evil day.

4. That cry, "All flesh is grass," and all the goodliness thereof, is as the flower of the field. You must die, and that ere long. Nay, how soon, you do not know. But where are thy evidences for heaven? Art thou fit to meet the Bridegroom of souls? O up and trim your lamps; all will have enough to do. It is sad travelling out of the world, when people know not where they shall next take up their lodging.

The church is crying to you to awake. Zion spreads forth her hands, and cries for help from her children. Her Lord is angry with her, threatening to give up house with her. Enemies are gathering together against her, saying, let Zion be defilled, and let our eye look upon Zion. Have you not sucked the breasts of her consolations. O stir up yourselves to plead with her Lord, for your mother. The ark is like to be carried captive, it is not time to sleep.

Posterity is crying to you. O pity the rising generation, the generation yet unborn. Murder not their souls before their bodies have got life. If they be brought up in darkness, and get poison instead of food, the present generation will bear the blame. The generation of the Jews that rejected Christ, brought his blood upon their children.

4. To those that are awake, I shall only say.

I. Be thankful. It was God that gave you grace, and he has kept you awake. You had been sleeping the sleep of death as well as others, if he had not done it. It is a rare mercy, seeing your case is as in the text. It is a rare thing, a waking, active frame. It is a special favour from heaven. The Lord comes by, and goes by

many others' bed's side, and yet while they sleep, he awakens you. It is also a seasonable mercy. If ever there was a season to be awake, to have our lamps trimmed, it is now, when the enemy is at the gate, and the Lord is saying, "prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

2. Be watchful. Perhaps your case now is not so easy, yet it is safer than before. O beware of falling asleep again. Awakening grace, is a tender bud of heaven easily hurt. "Our vines have tender grapes." Therefore I say, I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken my love till he please. It is hard to keep awake among a company of sleeping professors, Rev. iii. 4. Resolve now in the Lord's strength as Hezekiah, "to go softly all your years in the bitterness of your soul." Be sensible of your danger, and look to the Lord for continued supply.

3. Be diligent. This is a golden spot of time; miss it not, nor let it slip. "The substance of a diligent man is precious." Now you have a fair wind for Immanuel's land, spread out your sails and steer away, lest if you miss it, the wind fall, and you tug and row in vain. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Redeeming the time, seeing the days are evil." Now you are even between the losing and the gaining. You are up the first step, go up the second. Take hold of him; get sure hold of him for yourself and for the church, Exod. xxxiv. 8, 9. Dig deep, build on the rock, get sure evidences for heaven.

I shall shut up all, with speaking to some important questions. There are some of the godly really exercised about the case of their souls, who think themselves under a decay when they are not so. The first question is, How a person may thus mistake his case?

That God's people may think their case worse than it is, is plain, Isa. xlix. 14—17. So also did Jacob, and the disciples going to Emmaus.

1. The wearing of some glittering, though unsanctified affections, which they had before, while religion was yet new to them. Some never had more, and therefore, when these are gone, all is gone. True converts want not these either. New converts will have more fears, desires of grace, joy and delight, than mature ones. When grace comes first into the soul, it is with the man as with the Israelites, when they came first out of Egypt. "A mixed multitude went up also with them." But this multitude came not to Canaan. The army indeed was then less, but nothing the worse for want of them. So it is in this case.

2. The settling of violent commotions, which they sometimes had.

When these are gone, then some are apt to think, O they are undone. But truly there is no loss, when more solidity comes in their room. New ale works violently, yet when it is older, it hath more life. James and John, sometimes were at that, they would have fired whole towns, that would not receive Christ, Luke ix. 54. But when they received more of the Spirit, they were not so fiery, yet certainly, they were better men. Small rivers in time of rain, run more violently, but afterwards they still run, less violently indeed, but more regularly. Some gracious souls may think, O the love they had to Christ once, by what they have now. O they could not have prayed with dry cheeks, their prayers would have affected a thousand Christians. Now it is not so. But how do you love Christ now, would you not rather part with all, than with him? Are you not grieved for offending him? Do you pray weighted with a sense of your sinfulness and unworthiness? Disquiet not yourselves. Often where water goes out, wind enters. There is much false fire in flashes of affection. New married people may be fonder, but afterwards more loving.

3. People's abating of their rashness and indiscretion. A man that is truly gracious, yet rash and indiscreet, when he reproves sin; if you do not presently yield, then he is in a flame. How sharp are his reproofs? O what zeal is there? Afterwards God gives the man more knowledge, and then he has less of his own passion and corruption mixed with his duty. There is no loss there, Num. xx. 10; Psal. cvi. 32, 33. See 2 Sam. xv. compare verse 26 with 31. Now he was no less affected, but he was more judicious. Mark that prayer, Phil. i. 9.

4. Presumption and self-confidence being much weakened. Grace mixed with self-confidence, will make a man seem far more than he is. Like a man newly recovered, thinks he is well enough, so walks stoutly, till he finds his strength fails; and he does not do so again, not because he has less strength, but is more sensible of his weakness than before. O! how much transported with love to Christ seemed Peter to be, when he said, "though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." He could compare with all the apostles and go beyond them. But when Jesus said to him, "lovest thou me, more than these thy brethren?" Peter would now make no comparisons, but said, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Did he love Christ less, think you? Nay, surely; but he was less presumptuous. The wings of love and humility were better grown, though he did not fly so high as before.

5. A decay of natural vigour and activity. The existence of

grace does not depend on the temper of the body, but yet the exercise of grace in religious duties, may be much hindered or furthered that way. There is more grace necessary to make a godly man naturally timorous, to speak a word for Christ, than to make a godly man naturally bold, to draw a sword in his quarrel. A man naturally passionate to put up with an injury, needs more grace than a man naturally mild. The one swims with the stream, and goes a greater way; the other against, and goes less, yet may be the best swimmer of the two. I take this to be the case of some old professors. Perhaps they could have remembered sermons, continued long in prayer; heard not, prayed not with dry cheeks; but now it is not so with them. Truly, no wonder; when natural vigour is gone, moisture dried up, and memory failed. Was David a coward, when his "men sware unto him, that he should no more go out with them to battle, that the light of Israel should be quenched." The man may have as great love to God, hatred to sin, desire to remember the word as ever. But he cannot make so good music as he did; not because his skill is failed, but the instrument is cracked. So with young and old ministers.

6. The failing of more than ordinary assistance, which they sometimes had. It is usual for the Lord thus to assist his people, when they first set out on his way; even to dandle them a while on his knees, till they be somewhat grown. "Behold, says he, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." As men do with their children that are learning to walk. Few young children get broken brows, till they can walk freely alone; and few young converts have been such a reproach to religion, as standing Christians, Hos. xi. 1—3. Why that now, is it because they have more grace? No; but they have more extraordinary assistance. The load may be lying more heavily on the Christian's back, than before, yet no less strength.

7. More temptations than formerly. One that is but dull and heavy, may walk more quickly than the nimblest man with a clog at his heels, the horse retains his metal, though he goes not so quickly carrying double, as he did single. People ought not to mistake here. There are times when the Lord leads into temptation, and when he holds them off.

Lastly, Felt stirring of corruption more than before, Rom. vii. 21—24. This did not say he was under a decay. Many a time corruption stirs most when it has least strength. When it is nailed to the cross, it cannot but stir and make a noise.

Let not the godly then that are exercised about their case, mistake here. Remember their is a growing downward as well as

upward, in humility, self-denial, self-loathing, and serious dependence upon the Lord, Hos. xiv. 5. People may have less comfort and less strength by sense than before, and yet have more grace, walking by faith. The safest walk a Christian has in the world, is walking betwixt his own emptiness and the fulness of the Mediator.

QUESTION 2. How these that are under a real decay, may get an upstirring and recovery?

1. Labour to work in your hearts a deep sense of the evil of this woeful temper. Ask your own souls in secret, Is not this the great God provoking sin? Though a man be guilty of many sins, yet if he stir up himself to take hold of the Lord, his case is then not so bad as when he thus neglects the remedy. This was God's quarrel with the old world. Is not this a common sin, and shall I, with the multitude, conspire against the Lord? John vi. 67. How weak has it made me? Has it not been Delilah's lap, in which my strength has been taken away, and my two eyes put out? Is not this the very ruin of the foolish virgins, that have escaped the pollutions of the world?

2. Exercise faith in Christ for quickening influences. He is the fountain of life. Faith is the hand, stretch it out, though withered. It is the eye, open it, and with one look to thyself, behold thine own inability to recover thyself. Many times men get an awakening, but fall asleep again. The reason is, they intend to rise, not to be raised; and so they are even allowed to fall again, as people do with children that are fallen and refuse help. Faith is a self-emptying grace, it sets down the man for a cypher in his own account book, 2 Cor. xii. 11.

With the other eye look to Christ for quickening influences. It is faith that raiseth the legally dead soul, Col. ii. 12. It also raiseth the sick soul out of a faint, "They looked to him and were lightened." A look to the brazen serpent healed the stung Israelites. A look at a crucified Saviour will do wonders, Zech. xii. 10. Let faith then look earnestly to the blood of Christ, it cleanseth from all sin, and purgeth the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. Plead by faith the end of Christ's coming, that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. Let faith make use of the privilege of union with Christ, and lay hold of the promises suited to your case, Hos. xiv. 7; Mal. iv. 2.

3. Make conscience of godly conference, like the disciples going to Emmaus. Conversation with godly Christians may do much good. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise. You may say these are rare. But you that ever have had any experience of religion, tell your case one to another; and though you, and your

company were both alike; yet two cold flint stones struck together, will send forth fire. "Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but wo to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up." Experience has confirmed all this. Christ sent out his disciples two and two.

4. Reflect on former experiences. Deeply muse on the days when it was better with you than now. Recall to mind the particular times when, and where, you had something of God, which you have not now, Psal. xlii. 6. God is saying to you, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me." Old experiences sometimes give a fresh smell, when handled anew, Gen. xxxv. 3. They are like spices that have long lain by hand, yet when broken give a fragrant smell. They do also remarkably contribute to fill our faces with blushing before the Lord. Every experience comes out with that inscription, "O generation, see ye the word of the Lord; have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness." They contribute much to strengthen our faith, and to give us confidence with God, who is unchangeable. He that has been often cured by a physician, may come back to him with the greater confidence. Indeed, where we pay nothing, it is just contrary among men; but not so with God, though our hearts in a law fit may think it so. But the best return you can make to God, is to come always again, when any thing is the matter with you.

5. Comply with the Spirit in afflicting dispensations. A sinner falls asleep. Christ knocks by his word, he awakens not, God then bringeth his rod to awaken him. Affliction is a special season for awakening influences, Hos. xii. 14, 15. Strike the iron while it is hot with the fire of affliction, as it is this day.

6. Consider seriously the signs of the times, in order to be stirred up, Matth. xvi. 3. Look about you, and behold how the fields seem to be ripening for a harvest of judgment. This was the thing that roused up Jonah, i. 4. Could we but look over our beds, and see how the fire is taking hold of the house, it would make us start to our feet. Concern about the public, not improved to the advantage of our own souls, is but little worth; but the right noticing of state affairs, would make us like Noah, best when others are worst, doubling our diligence, and getting ourselves into a posture for an evil day, like Noah in the ark. But alas! it is to be feared the evil overtake us, and find us, as Agag or Saul, among the stuff; or Jonah, or the evil servant, Matth. xxiv. 48, 49.

7. Labour to renew your repentance. Repentance is not only the work of a sinner at first conversion to God, but ought to be carried on all the days of our life; but in a special manner ought it to be set about, after great backslidings. Then we are called to repent, and do the first works. Satisfy not yourselves to be affected with your decay on a Sabbath day, and to stuff your prayers with dry inactive complaints, but forthwith call in your heart that has too long gone a roving. What wonder the ship dash on rocks, when there is none sitting at the helm. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Watch against vain thoughts and words. Watch the beginnings of a revival, and blow up the sparks.

Lastly, Pray for quickening influences. It is a great mercy, and the church prays for it, saying, "quicken us, and we will call upon thy name." When you come to offer your sacrifices, pray as Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 37, 38. Cry mightily for it. If your hearts be dead, yet try to rouse them, and force their fervency. A person may be so benumbed with cold, he can scarcely walk; yet by going, he becomes capable to run, and running gathers heat. The residue of the Spirit is with the Lord.

QUESTION 3. What shall we do to hold Christ still amongst us.

1. Give him lodging in the best room. He is a King, and must be honourably entertained. Receive him into your hearts. Christ is standing at the door of your hearts, knocking for entrance, but threatening to go away, if you will not open. "Be thou instructed," says he, "O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited." He has been long knocking, if he go, the bodies of some may be in the grave, their souls in hell, ere he return. The Jews had much guilt lying on them, but the rejecting of the bridegroom, and marriage feast, was the great thing that ruined them, Matth. xxii. So Scotland has much guilt, but if they continue to reject Christ, that will ruin them. Come then, old and young, to Christ. "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." The axe is laid to the root of the tree. God has his Son in the one hand, the axe in the other. He is setting life and death, the blessing and the curse, before you.

2. Let all his enemies be dismissed, the Achans in the camp. We cannot hold our lusts and Christ too. This is reasonable. He requires us to part with nothing but what they may well spare. Personal reformation is necessary to hold Christ still. National reformation is also necessary, but it must begin at home. Let us, therefore, every one reform ourselves and our families, for we are all guilty. There is none to cast a stone at another. Every one has a hand in bringing on wrath.

3. Lament after the Lord. This brought him back when gone, 1 Sam. vii. 2—6. The tears of the Lord's people, and their sighs after the Lord, go very far with a tender-hearted father. There are many things we cannot help; mourn over these, the sins of former, and present times. Alas! it is easy to speak of these, by what it is to be affected with the dishonour done to God by them.

4. Give him employment. Christ riseth not to pack up his wares, while sinners are about his hand, to buy them from him. O! for a deep sense of need, and a distinct view of our wants, that would make us be hanging on about his hand; and need takes a sure hold of Christ, and he cannot go from such, Mark vii. 24—30. If any thing be the ruin of this generation, it will be wearying of God. And alas! that is written on our foreheads, and therefore God is like to be weary of us, and is saying this day, "Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies."

5. Improve his ordinances for the end for which they are appointed, and labour to get, and keep up communion with him in them. God has covered a table for us, these many years. How little the ordinances are regarded, is too evident. We have lost our appetite. God seems to be calling enemies to draw our table. O! that we were wise, at length, to prize them for their worth, before the want of them convince us of their value. If popery overspread this land again, what is now lightly valued, will, it is likely, be highly esteemed.

6. Study unity, and beware of division; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Psalm cxxxiii. Our Lord lays an astonishing weight on unity amongst his followers: "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Let no difference of judgment, in every point, break the bond of peace and communion. Our divisions, if they grow, will make us a prey to the common enemy, as they now make us a laughing stock to them. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. If ever there was a time for professors uniting it is now; as the beasts in the ark, when the deluge was come on. It is to be feared, that the fire is begun, that will melt some to their cost, before it be put out. Shall we unite in sin? No, by no means. But mark the apostle's rule. "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing, ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Lastly, Pray; O! pray that the Lord may not leave us. "Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished; as a mighty man that cannot

save? Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not." Our time is a time of need, that may make them pray, that never bowed a knee before. Prayer has done great things. It has opened the windows of heaven, James v. 18. Prison doors, Acts xvi. 25, 26. It hath held the destroying hand of God, Exod. xxii. 10. Prayer has defeated armies of enemies invading the land, 2 Chron. xx: Isa. xxxvii. God has all in his own hand, and prayer engageth him on a people's side. "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, ask me of things to come; concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me." Pray for yourselves, for the land, and for the church.

QUESTION 4. Whether we have any ground to think that Christ will not leave us altogether? Although we have no ground to think that we shall escape some judgment; yet that God will not utterly leave us, there are some things that give us ground to hope, as,

1. There are some, however few, in the land, that are wrestling, partly resolved never to give consent to Christ's departure, by word or deed, Psalm cii. 16—18. Moses must let God alone, ere he cut off Israel, Exod. xxii. His prayers did not prevail to hold off a stroke, but a final stroke. Never yet did God altogether frustrate the prayers of a wrestling remnant. "For the Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

2. There are some, whose work it is to walk with God, and to fear the Lord, and endeavouring to keep their garments clean; and however few they be, God has made large promises unto them, Isa. xxxiii. 15—20. There are some, who have Christ's love tokens yet lying by them, to bring forth in a day of distress; who if the Lord should seem to cast off this covenanted land, would bring them forth and say discern to whom these belong, and we are his.

3. Our mother is yet bearing children to her husband. We dare not say that she is so fruitful as she has been, yet she is not become barren. She is still nursing some, and bringing forth others. As there are some yet, who drew their first breath in the wilderness, so there is a holy seed brought forth since the revolution, to be the substance of the land. And in several corners of the land, some young ones are looking kindly to Christ. When the gardner is planting new slips in the garden, it is an evidence he intends not to give it over. As Manoah's wife said unto him, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would at this time have told us such things as these."

4. This land hath been married to the Lord in covenant. It was entered into a covenant with the Lord, early after the reformation from popery. That work, indeed, hath suffered many interruptions from enemies, yet it hath always got up again. Many have laid down their lives for that cause. We had their prayers for the revival of that work, and we can scarcely think we have yet reaped the full fruit of their blood and prayers; or that God will divorce a people not willing to part with him.

Lastly, Much is said of the glory of the latter days, see Isaiah lx. The man of sin will be brought down; and if the pope fall, it is likely prelates will not stand. But yet, matters in the churches of Christ, will be according to the pattern in the mount.

But after all, there is like to be a sad stroke in the first place, and that some of our eyes shall be closed, and many of this generation taken out of the way, before the Lord return, if he were once gone away, as Micah vii. 11—13. It is like, our way to it may be through a red sea; so that we may say, as Balaam, "Alas! who shall live when God doth this?"

QUESTION LAST —But what shall we do in the meantime, in such a reeling time as this?

ANSWER.—You that never covenanted with God, enter into a personal covenant with him' and let others solemnly renew their covenant, and make a solemn upgiving of themselves unto the Lord. "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." This is a chariot, in which Christ's bride may ride safely to heaven, through fire and water. And as we are again called to national fasting, so in the meantime, let that be your exercise. "And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."

2. Lay your accounts with, and prepare for suffering. Strive, like Paul, "to be ready, not to be bound only, but also to die, for the name of the Lord Jesus." The market is like to be raised, and our lightness and frothiness like to be daunted. The tender mercies of Popish idolaters are cruel. Much blood is in the skirts of the whore and there may be more.

3. Labour to get yourselves wrapt up in a promise, Gen. xxxii. 12. Many of God's children, have dined, supped, and dwelt in a promise, in an evil day. It has been instead of all, and cheered their hearts under the want of all, Hab. iii. 17. It has been a comfort to them in distress, life, when half dead, Psalm cxix. 49, 50.

A song in the house of their pilgrimage, verse 54. When the water of God's wrath is coming down, he is a wise man that climbs to such a branch of the tree of life growing on the banks, and holds by it till the flood be over. Amen.

December 22, 1705.

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

SERMON XXXVII.

JAMES iii. 6,

The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.

THE keeping of the tongue is one of those duties, that entitles a man to safety from evil times, and therefore must now be urged as a seasonable duty. "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile." The difficulty of this duty is such, that James saith, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." The wisest monarch could hardly govern a great part of the world; how difficult then must it be to govern a world, and that a world of iniquity. The tongue is a world of iniquity, a heap of evils; as in the world many things are contained, so in the tongue.

I shall endeavour to make some discovery of this world of iniquity. As it is beyond my power, so it is not my design to make a full discovery of it. We must leave a void for the unknown parts of it. But behold a few of them: This world of iniquity is divided into two parts, undue silence, and sinful speaking. These are the higher and lower parts of this world, yet quickly may men travel from the one to the other. I shall speak of these in their order.

1. Undue silence, when the tongue rests idle, when God calls it to work. Our tongues are our glory, and should not be involved in a dark cloud of silence, when God calls them to shine forth.

1. Silence is unseasonable, when sin rageth and roareth. When men are dishonouring God, it is sad that our tongues should be nailed. When men declare their sin, as Sodom, it is sad that in our mouths there should be no reproofs. "Thou shalt in any wise

rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Our tongues testify that we are men, and they should shew we are Christians and in a covenant with God, offensive and defensive. "For the zeal of thine house," saith David, "hath eaten me up: and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me." By this undue silence, we are injurious to God, in that we do not vindicate his glory, bespattered with the sins of others. His glory, I say, who hath given us a tongue as a banner, to be displayed because of truth. To run away here with flying colours, doubles the dishonour of God; while he is once dishonoured by the sinner, and again, by the silent professor, Mark viii. 38.

This undue silence is also injurious to our neighbour. We see him pulling down the house about his ears, and yet we will not help him; selling his soul for a trifle, and yet we do not bid him rue his bargain. O horrid cruelty! to stand with our tongues in silence, when the devil often casteth our neighbour into the fire.

It is injurious likewise, to ourselves, for thereby we adopt the devil's children brought forth by others, and set down their debts to our own account, Eph. v. 7—11. Other men's sins that we have occasioned, become ours, by silence, which gives consent; and the flame that burns up their house, will consume our own, if it be not quenched with a testimony against it. This silence also leaves a sting in our conscience, which remains inactive in the hearts of some for a while; but when the opportunity of bearing testimony against sin is gone, it bites dreadfully the hearts of those, whose consciences are not seared.

2. When an opportunity of edifying others inviteth us to speak, "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." O what iniquity is contracted, by the neglect of heavenly discourse among professors. A dumb Christion is a very unprofitable servant. A philosopher seeing a man with a fair face and a silent tongue, bade him speak, that he might see him. When scholars or merchants meet, we know what they are by their discourse; and why should not Christians also discover themselves. When men of the same nation, meet in foreign countries, they speak the language of their own country. I will say but three things of this neglect:

1. Dumb Christians are very unlike Christ, whose ordinary way it was to spiritualize all things, and turn the current of the discourse toward heaven. This we see exemplified in every part of his history.

2. Either there is no religion at all, or but very little, in that

heart. Nearest the heart, nearest the mouth. If fire be upon the hearth, the smoke will come out at the chimney. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; singing with grace in your hearts, to the Lord."

3. They are very useless sort of people; like the vine that is fruitless. "Shall wood be taken thereof, to do any work? or will men take a pin of it, to hang any vessel thereon."

3. Silence is unseasonable when our wants are crying. These should make us cry to God, like that woman, who cried to the king of Israel, saying, "Help, my Lord, O King." O! what a dreadful thing is it, to think that a dumb devil should so possess the hearts of many, who will not call upon God. That tongue shall be tormented in hell flames, that will not now cry to God by prayer. "God will pour out his fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that call not upon his name." They have tongue enough for the world, that have none for God and their poor souls. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

II. Sinful speaking; when the tongue is exercised, but ill exercised; and this is a throng piece of this world of iniquity. I may divide it again into two parts, one against our duty to God, the the other against our duty to man, where *mind ourself* is our nearest neighbour. Only there is one part of this world of iniquity, that scorns to be bounded by either of these, and that is talkativeness, or much speaking; of which we may say they set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Some are ever talking, and are never in their element, but when they are prattling; and when once they begin, it as difficult to stop them, or get word about, as to stop a flood of water, and turn the stream another way. Though they speak little, yet long. Their words clatter like a loose window in wind; whereby, though they give vent to their own pride, yet they grate the ears of others, and make them sit on thorns. I will say but two things of it.

1. It is a sign of a loose and frothy heart, where there is little of the fear of God. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy word's be few." God hath given us two ears, and but one tongue, and that with a twofold guard upon it. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren," says James, "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." "Wise men lay up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish is near to destruction."

2. It is the fool's badge. "A fool's voice is known by multitude of words." It is the empty barrel that makes most noise. Such persons from want of acquaintance with themselves, present a fool to others, while they think him a wise man. They that are given to much speaking, seldom speak well. This made an orator ask a double fine of a talkative scholar; one to learn him to speak well, another to teach him to hold his peace. We should be like the virtuous woman. She openeth her mouth with wisdom. Her mouth is not always open, but duly shut, and discreetely opened. Her words are few, true, and useful. Now come we to the

I. Which is against our duty to God. Here I shall pitch on,

1. Rash swearing by the name of God. "Swear not at all," says our Saviour. O how is the name of God rent by black mouthed atheists in our day, whose discourse bewrayeth them to be hellileans. There is swearing also by the creatures, as by our conscience, faith, truth, and the like. These, men will rather minch and keep, than fairly give up; hence a brood of minched oaths, as Mary, good faith, and the like. And the little faith that is in the world, makes men hang by a hair of an oath, after they have been beaten from the more gross expressing of it; so by faith, ist urned to faith, and by is cut off; then it is turned to faicks, then haith; and they will rather eat in letters, and keep three, than lose that hellish ornament of discourse, hence, fai, do ye; hai, do ye. And persons using these, we will see at our own communion table. But, sinners, what pleasure or profit accompanies this sin. Other sins have something of this nature; this has nothing. You must then love it for itself; a pure devilish love indeed.

Again, know ye what a terrible one God is, that you dare abuse his name; even that dreadful name, at which the devils tremble; that name, to which ye shall bow at length, whether you will or not. Are you not afraid he banish you to hell, while the oath is in your mouth; where you will get a long eternity to blaspheme his name. And you that dare not swear by God, but by your faith and the like, how dare you swear by them that are no gods, Jer. v. 7. This is a piece of idolatry, and I fear your God (I mean your faith), will not save you at length. They have little or nothing of faith in their hearts, that have it so often in their mouths.

Once more, God will be avenged on you for these things, if you repent not, Jer. v. 7—9. Thy swearing will damn thy soul. "Above all things, my brethren," says the apostle James, "swear not, lest ye fall into condemnation." O! then swear no more, lest God swear in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for

the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain."

OBJECTION 1. God forbid that be true, that God will be so severe for words.

ANSWER. Words are a wind that will blow you to hell: For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. Mind also the roll's dimensions, Zech. v. 2, 3. There it is contained, every one that sweareth, shall be cut off as on that side, according to it. The roll exactly answers the dimensions of their houses, and of the porch of the temple where the law was taught, 1 Kings vi. 3. It will make you completely miserable, the execution exactly answering the threatening.

OBJECTION 2. I never swear but when angry.

ANSWER. Nor does God ever damn a man for swearing, or any other sin, but when he is angry. Is it God that offends you? Why do you set your tongues against the heavens, when your fellow worms displease you?

OBJECTION 3. I have got a custom of it.

ANSWER. Custom is no defence. Is not thy sin then the more heinous? If a man has a custom of reproaching you, will that justify his conduct? Whence is this custom, but from your casting off God's fear.

OBJECTION 4. It is a common thing.

ANSWER. So much the worse. The men of the world conspire against God and dishonour him, and therefore you do so too; then, you shall perish with the world. Sooth not yourselves with that, that if it be ill with you, it will be ill with many one; for although most men should perish eternally, surely it will be no comfort to go to hell with company.

2. A light, irreverent, and profane using of the name of God, in common talk. We are not worthy to take his name in our mouths, much less ought we to abuse it in common talk. Would we speak of God with reverence, we should speak as in his sight and hearing, and this would cut off the irreverent use of God's name in any little matter that fools wonder at, or pretend to wonder at, and fear, as "God bless us, save us, Christ have a care of us, Lord have mercy on us." My brethren, the blessing of God is a matter of great moment, and you should either seek it on the bended knees of your body, or, at least, of your heart. But it is not they that are serious with God for these things, that use to seek them in this way.

It would cut off also, the irreverent use of God's name in obsecrations; "as for God's sake, love of God, Christ's sake," &c. These things may be used in weighty matters, but in trifles they are horrid. Let them be great things, that concern your own or your

neighbour's life or salvation, that you will seek for God's sake. When you do it, do it with reverence, as in his sight.

It would likewise cut off irreverence, in appeals to God in mere trifles, as, "God knows, where he is I know not." The omniscience of God is no matter of moonshine. The serious thoughts of it may make the best of us to tremble, and the worst of us not to make light of it.

It would do this also in prayers for the dead. Some cannot speak of the dead without a prayer, that perhaps never prayed for them while living. The dead are in an unchangeable state; and by these things you may bring down wrath on the living, but no help to the dead.

Many such ways is God's name abused. Yea, it is common with many to be very liberal of God's name, as "let him do it in God's name." Nay, many will have God or Lord in their discourse, when neither others nor themselves know what they would be at by it, as, "Lord man!" But I fear we are not at the bottom yet of the dunghill. Know ye God, that he is the Lord, and holy is his name.

3. Cursing; whereby we wish some horrid ill to ourselves or neighbours; but, because it is a kind of profane prayer, I speak of it under this head. This is done, either, 1. By expressing the name of God, as in these, "God damn, confound," &c. Oh! what if God should take these poor wretches at their wish, they would find that damnation is no matter of sport. 2. The name of God sometimes is supposed, but the profane prayer is belched out, as, "I would ye may break your neck," &c, in which men call on God to be an executioner of their wicked and passionate sentences on themselves or others. 3. Hitherto I refer to the invocating of the devil. O! what homage does the devil get from many Christians, who are found oftener praying to him than to God, as, "Devil take me." Sometimes they change, and minch his name, as, "foul fiend, sorrow one, for devil one," &c. These are the Goliahs, that boast and curse themselves or others by their God.

O! beware of cursing, James iii. 9—11. It is very provoking to God, and pleasing to the devil, who is also ready to take you by your word, when he can get leave. It is the character of a wicked man. "His mouth is full of cursing, and deceit, and fraud; under his tongue is mischief and vanity." Cursing will bring a curse upon you, if repentance prevent not. "As he loved cursing, so let it come to him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing, like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones."

4. Profaning of scripture phrases, by jesting or scoffing on the scriptures; or using them to express the conceptions of men's wanton wits, alluding to them in common talk, and the like. Alas! this is much used by the profane generation, who hold forth their contempt of the word, by these means. It is knowing persons readily, that are guilty. This is an affronting of God, whose sacred oracles the scriptures are. The heathens paid a profound respect to the oracles of their gods. The Jews and primitive Christians, had a great respect for the scriptures; so have all the godly, in all ages. If men should treat our letters to them at this rate, how would we take it. Remember the Scriptures are the word by which you shall be judged. The man that would burn his rights to land, or like a child, tear them and dress babies with them, would soon be denuded of his estate; so they who thus treat the Bible, will soon be denuded of heaven, of which the scriptures are the rights.

5. Mocking of religion and seriousness. There are some, in whose consciences the piety of others leaves a sting, and therefore they endeavour to laugh it away, and mock at those who are serious, and reproach them for that which is their glory. "They that sit in the gate, speak against me," says David, "and I was the song of the drunkards." To mockers, I would say,

Your sport is not that of God's people. Let me see an instance in all the Bible, of a mocker that was a godly man. "The godly man sitteth not in the seat of the scorner." And as this practice of mocking leads the way to the sin against the Holy Ghost, so there is scarcely any thing except that sin, that is so sure a sign of a ruinous state.

Again, you do but make the cords with which you shall be bound under the wrath of God for ever. "Now, therefore, be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." If ever you get repentance, and be saved, you must be saved in that way you mock now. Either you must be like them you mock, or perish for ever: "For without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Objection. It is but hypocrisy that we mock.

Answer. But that is a horrid untruth. If it be so, why do you not imitate those you mock, so far as they do well? Why do you not shew as much distaste of the ways of the openly wicked? But how come you to judge men's hearts, when their outward actions appear good? Nay, let us entreat you to try religion, and be not as these, who speak evil of the things they know not, but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. I would give you such advice as was given to the Athenians, that they should be sure that Philip was dead, before they expressed

joy for his death. Be sure that there is no reality in religion, before you mock at it.

6. Reasoning against religion, and defending sinful opinions and practices. This is very frequent with men who love carnal liberty, and so endeavour to shelter sinful practices, under the cloak of reason; yea, and the Scriptures too, by which they bring God himself to be a patron to their wickedness." But the curse is denounced against these. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

Lastly, Murmuring and complaining. Proud hearts make us fret at the dispensations of providence. This sets the tongue on fire, and hence some are ever complaining, as if their tongues had been given them for no other end, but to accuse God. Read Jude 14, 15, 16. It is a base tongue that will proclaim our crosses, and bury our mercies, though the last are far more numerous than the former.

II. Against our duty to man. I shall here specify these following things,

1. Idle speaking. That is, words spoken to no good purpose, tending neither to the glory of God, nor the good of ourselves or others, either in spiritual or temporal things. This is condemned. "But I say unto you," said Jesus, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof, in the day of judgment." It may be comprehended under that foolish talking which is not convenient; rash, roving, and impertinent discourse, which doth no good to the hearers, but bewrays the folly of the speaker. It will not be long ere our speech be laid, so that it is sad to waste our little breath so idly. We have enough besides, to fill our accounts, though we wanted that. A gracious soul will beware of idle words, as of vain thoughts.

2. A trade of jesting. Paul says, "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient." It is not unlawful to pass an innocent jest, to produce a moderate recreation. But if a jest be allowed to be sauce to our conversation, yet it is impious to make it the meat. For a man to make every word a jest, is fitter for a stage than Christian gravity. And seldom, if ever, is it so managed, but it is offensive both to God and man; but some will rather lose their friend than their jest.

3. Lying; of which there are four sorts: 1. Pernicious. 2. Officious. 3. The sporting lie. 4. The rash lie; when men through inadvertency, and customary looseness, tell an untruth; as when tidings were brought to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left. This is so common,

that we may say truth hath fallen in the streets. Few so tender, as to avoid making a lie. Consider God is a God of truth, and therefore it is most contrary to his nature, and the devil is the father of lies. It is a badge of the old man. "Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man." The godly are children that will not lie. A lying tongue is an abomination to the Lord, and lies will lodge the soul with the devil for ever. All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Say not it is only to do good to others, for we must not speak wickedly for God. Some lie to keep others from sin, but it is an excess of charity for a man to damn his own soul, to save another's. If it is to make sport, surely that grieves the Spirit of God, and is indeed sport to the devil. Or, if you say you know no better, remember God has given you a heart to think before you speak, and before you speak you should be sure.

4. Uncharitable speaking of truth, to the wounding of the reputation of others. It is not enough, that what ill we speak of others be true, but the speaking of it must bring a greater, than the disadvantage the party gets by it. This brought the curse on Ham and his posterity, Gen. ix. 22. And we should imitate Shem and Japheth, with respect to the faults of others. This uncharitable speaking is readily the effect of pride, while others are cast down, that we may rise on their ruins; or of envy which, like the flies, pass over the sound parts, and feed on the sores in the body. It is most contrary to charity, which covers the multitude of sins. Truth may come from a malicious heart, as in Doeg's case, 1 Sam. xxii. 8, 9 This does not stop at the real faults of others, but oftentimes breaks out to the natural defects of others, or to that which is really their affliction; in which that holds true, he that despiseth the poor, reproacheth his Maker.

5. Slandering or backbiting. Of this, three sorts of persons are guilty: 1. He that raiseth a false report of his neighbour, Exod. xxiii. 1. Here is a true son of the devil, with malice and lying in conjunction. 2. He who readily reports it, though he knows it to be false, as readily receives, though he is not sure it is true. 3. He that spreads it. This is a very common sin. Tale bearers and whisperers are found every where, whose tongues are swords to stab the reputation of others.

Ye do the devil's work, who is the accuser of the brethren. Ye are his special errand-bearers, and no doubt, will get such wages as he has to give. Consider that sad passage, Psal. l. 20, 22. "Therefore, speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law."

6. Censoriousness, which construes the words and actions of others, always to the worse. Many are of such a waspish nature, that they can suck poison out of the sweetest flowers, and have an evil tale of every person, Matth, vii. 1, 2.

7. Flattery; a base kind of sin, by which men strive to humour others, at the loss of truth, to the great hurt of the party flattered. Of such a person it may be said, "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." But this is remarkable, that these that will speak fair before a man's face, will not stand to wound him behind his back. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.

8. Boasting; by which men talk big of themselves, or others concerned in them; trumpeting out their own praise, a sin which is odious in the sight of every man. Some boast themselves of what they have not. "Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain." Others, of what they have, setting it in a magnifying glass. These are the black roll, 2 Tim. iii. 2.

Lastly, Obscenity. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." This argues a rotten heart, and is ready to infect others. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." O! how like the devil, that unclean Spirit, do they look, who cannot hold within the bounds of common modesty. These are some of the most common parts of the world of iniquity.

INFERENCE 1. If the tongue be a world of iniquity, what must the heart be; for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. You may know the lion by his paw.

2. See wherein true greatness consists: to govern a world of iniquity. Here is work for you. To help you.

1. Labour to get the heart purified from these sins and lusts that it vents by the tongue. Quench the fire on the hearth, and the smoke will cease.

2. Get the fear of God impressed on your hearts, and walk as under the eye of an all-seeing God. This will be a bridle and a spur to the tongue, for it needs both. Amen.

January 12, 1707.

ON THE DUTY OF PRAYING FOR THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH.

SERMON XXXVIII.

PSALM cxxii. 6,

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

THIS psalm seems to have been penned when the ark had been newly brought to Jerusalem, and set up in the tabernacle which David pitched for it. Now it was in a fixed place, after it had been in several places. See 2 Sam. vi. 7; 1 Chron. xv. 17. In the text we have, 1. A duty; namely, prayer. 2. A particular part of the matter of prayer; "the piece of Jerusalem." This city was now in peace, and the continuance of it is to be desired. In Jerusalem now were the tabernacle and the ark, and the solemn assemblies for worship. In this respect it was a type of the church.

DOCTRINE. It is the duty of all church members, to pray for the peace of the church. Let us,

I. Shew what this peace is.

II. Give reasons why we should pray for it.

I. We are to shew what this peace is. It consists in these two:

1. The removal of evils from the church of Christ. Many are the evils to which the church is liable, while here; and therefore she as a city, must have her walls, bulwarks, soldiers, and watchmen. It is Jerusalem above, only, which is past hazard. "The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there."

2. The enjoyment of positive blessings. Her peace includes her prosperity; that she be in a prosperous condition, not standing still, not going backward. "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." All kingdoms and states have their revolutions. One while they prosper, another they are in adversity. Jerusalem's prosperity is spiritual. It is produced by the light of God's countenance, and by the communications of his grace. When under these, the children of Zion grow in knowledge, holiness, and comfort, and enjoy all their privileges undisturbed; then Jerusalem hath peace.

II. We are to give reasons why we are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

1. Because God commands us not to hold our peace, till we see her peace. This command is express in the text. Says God by Isaiah, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Therefore the prophet himself, is peremptory as to this duty. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof, as a lamp that burneth."

2. Because of her relation to the God of peace. This should not only engage us to pray, but may encourage us to hope for her peace at length. The church is confederate with God, in a covenant of peace. She is the house of God. The city of the great King. The object of his special providence. "Behold he that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep."

3. Because of her relation to the Prince of Peace. The church is Christ's spouse, his body, she is built on him, she is his special charge from the Father; and is it not reasonable that the children be concerned for the peace of their mother, and the members for the body to which they belong. The nearer relation any of us have to Christ, the more should be our concern for the peace of Jerusalem.

4. Because her peace is purchased at a dear rate, even the blood of the Mediator of peace. "We are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace." Not only her inward, but her outward peace. Will not we pour out a prayer for that, for which Christ poured out his blood?

5. Because she hath many enemies without, ready on all occasions to disturb her peace. The enemy watcheth at her gates, ready on all occasions to break in. The devil has an army of wicked men, constantly in arms and pay, to fight against the church. The war was begun by Cain, but the sword is never yet put up, nor will be to the end of the world. As one race of wicked men goes off another takes up their weapons, and stand in their place.

6. Because she has disturbers of her peace within. There are hypocrites in her bosom, ready to betray the spouse, as Judas did his Lord. There are corruptions in the best; so that Jerusalem is often made to suffer by earthquakes, by reason of what is inclosed in her own bowels.

Use 1. Of reproof to those who are not concerned for the peace of Jerusalem. Some pray not at all. Some are longing to see Jerusalem in confusion, laid in heaps, and her ways filled with mourning. They are so far from praying for the church, that they

would fain make a prey of her, Isa. lix. 15. And seeing they are not acquaint with praying, they will drink her confusion, of which they have more skill than of praying. But if that would have done it, we would have all been confounded long since. Some pray, but Oh! they are not concerned for the church of Christ that is in hazard at this day. Consider that this neglect,

1. Is a sign that you have little or no love to Jerusalem, when you see her hazard, and pray not for her peace. When the dumb son of Crœsus, saw his father like to be killed, his affection to his father loosed his tongue, and made him cry out, that they might spare his father.

2. That you have no interest in Jerusalem, in Christ, and ordinances. Were your stock in a ship at sea, how would you be concerned for her coming safe into the harbour. They that have a lamb in the flock, love all the rest the better. Interest makes a man concerned. The Christian's all is at stake, when Jerusalem is in hazard.

3. You have little or nothing of the Spirit of Christ in you, and they that have not his Spirit, are none of his. The chief concern of the Lord Jesus, next to the glory of his Father, was the good of his church, John xvii. He that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye.

Use 2. Of exhortation. I exhort you all to pray for the peace of our Jerusalem at this day. The dispensations of providence call you to it. Four things are implied in the exhortation.

1. Be sensible of the danger of Jerusalem. There is no prayer in heaven, because no danger there; and there will be no prayers on earth, where people see no danger. If any think that the church of Christ is not in danger this day, I will more suspect their honesty than admire their wisdom. What sins that ever brought judgments on a church, that are not to be found among us? Leaving our first love, lukewarmness, men's abhorring the offering of the Lord, dreadful profanity, and the like. Matters are at such a pass, that we are like the children of Israel at the Red Sea; go we forward or backward, there is danger, if God do not wonderfully prevent it.

2. Highly prize the peace of Jerusalem. If people do not value it, they will not go to God in earnest with it. We should have such a concern for it as would swallow up our concern for other things; for if God depart from us, nothing will make up that loss. All the wealth of the Indies, is nothing in comparison of the worth of the gospel, or the purity of it.

3. Pray for it. Wrestle with God in prayer about it. Give it a large share in your prayers; nay, make it your very chief business, when you go to God. Pray,

1. For our Jerusalem's peace with God; the church's peace with heaven God has a controversy with Scotland. He is angry with our mother, because of her whoredoms. The evidence of it is our spiritual poverty, occasioned by a decay of trade with heaven, whence all the wealth of the people of God comes. This says our peace with heaven is interrupted, and the reasons of it are palpable, even the sins of former and present times, covenant breaking, unfruitfulness under the gospel.

O! that the nations of Scotland and England were so wise, as to lay to heart the avowed breach which they made with God, and that they are still making. And O that an uniting with heaven were set on foot, by repentance and reformation, and then they might think to unite among themselves on lasting foundations.

2. Pray for the peace of the protectors of Jerusalem. For the queen, under the shadow of whose authority, we have the peaceable enjoyment of gospel ordinances in purity and plenty, Isa. xlix. 23. When the Lord took away our nursing father, he raised up a nursing mother, and disappointed the hopes of enemies. Pray for the parliament, their peace with God and among themselves, in the Lord, 1 Tim. ii. 1. 2. They have need of prayers, especially while such great things are before them, as now are in agitation.

3. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem with her protectors; the peace of the church with the state, Psal. lxxii. 3. Though we have our church privileges from Christ, we have from them the peaceable enjoyment of them. And discord betwixt nursing fathers and the child, is a very dismal thing.

4. Pray for the peace of the temple in Jerusalem; for the peaceable enjoyment of gospel ordinances. They are sad days, when the Lord's people are in such a case as to fear the mingling of their blood with their sacrifices. It is a promise, though not absolute, "Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers." If people have other troubles, yet it is a great matter, when they have the comfort of ordinances left them. Coarse fare may go better down, when people are permitted to drink at the wells of salvation.

5. Pray for the peace of the waters of the sanctuary in Jerusalem; the purity of doctrine and worship, discipline and government. When the fountains are troubled with error and doctrine, idolatry or superstition in worship, corruption in discipline and government, it is a dangerous thing. David notes it as a great blessing, that he was led by the still waters, where the sheep need not be afraid to drink.

6. Pray for Jerusalem's peace with herself. Pray that the watchmen, the ministers, may be in peace among themselves. The darkness of the day, and of the duty of the day, creates hazard here. Bless God for what peace and harmony yet appears, and pray against division among them, and amongst professors, the daughters of Jerusalem. O! it is sad, when it comes to that, I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos. Division eats out the life of religion. When the ship splits, the passengers must needs be in hazard. Christ prays for their union, John xvii. 21; and the devil labours to break them, that he may destroy the church.

Lastly, Pray for the peace of the nation in which Jerusalem is. Pray for the peace of Scotland; for if judgments come upon the land, they usually begin at the house of God. I will pray you to comply with this.

1. For your brethren and companions' sake. Look about you, and as many men and women as you see, you have so many motives. Some of them have got grace, and they must cleave to Christ, whatever be the hazard. But O! it is a sad sight to see Jerusalem laid on heaps, Psalm lxxix. 1—3. Some are but weak, and will faint under trials, and wound their consciences. Others have no grace, and how will they get it, if the doors of the sanctuary be shut. Look on your little ones. Pity posterity. What will become of them, if the gospel go away? What came of our forefathers, who were born and brought up under popery? What were they obliged to their fathers that sinned away the gospel? What would have come of ourselves if God had not overturned popery and prelacy in this land.

2. For Zion's sake, Isa. lxii. 1. For the house of God's sake, Psalm cxxii. 9. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities. See how your hearts could bear to take your leave of it. Ordinances are the glory of the land. What a dismal business would it be to see our sermons and communions gone; darkness instead of divine light; the children fainting, and none to break the bread of life to them. This should prevail with us all, for there is none of us but are accessary to the disturbing of the peace of Jerusalem. This made it lie near old Eli's heart. If you had a friend in hazard of death, would you not be concerned for him; especially, if you had a hand in casting him into the disease.

Lastly, For God's sake, and for Christ's sake, Psalm cxxii. 4, 5. How can you think that God should be robbed of the honour of the assemblies of his people; that Christ's throne in the land should be overturned, and that enemies should blaspheme his name.

4. It imports the use of means, in order to attain the peace of

Jerusalem. We must not only pray for it, but also live for it. The means then are repentance and reformation, Lam. iii. 40, 41. Many projects have been, and are set on foot to bring this land out of the low state into which it is brought. But alas! the main point of all is little regarded, and that is repentance and reformation. Till this be, it will be but building on sandy foundations, unless the Lord mind to give us meat to our lusts, but leanness to our souls, which God forbid.

Let us resolve then with the zealous Israelites in Babylon, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Amen.

March 16, 1707.

DUTY AND ADVANTAGE OF SOLEMN MEDITATION.

SERMON XXXIX.

GENESIS xxiv. 26,

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even tide.

MAN is a social creature, and made for society, to converse with God, with himself, and with others. But as he is a bad householder who is always abroad, never to be found at home; so he is a bad Christian who is always at home, who is not sometimes retiring from the world and conversing with God and himself in the duty of meditation, by which the soul is set to its most proper work. We have in the text,

1. The duty to which Isaac set himself; meditation. It would seem that it was his ordinary practice. He had a good father, and a good education, and the grace of God in his heart; all which contributed to this practice. The word signifies to pray as well as to meditate; and they mingle well together, for meditation is to be mixed with prayer.

2. The time which he chose for this purpose. This in general, was when the weighty affair of his marriage, was in hand. Unlike to many who, at such a time, are least serious. But surely he knew how much of his happiness depended upon a right match, and this

sent him to God. In particular, at the even tide; in the afternoon, sometime toward night; when, perhaps, his ordinary business was over.

3. The place; the field, where he might be alone, free of the din and noise of the family; for the heart of man is easily drawn off, therefore he goes alone. Thus, also, with the refreshing of his body, he joined the working of the heart. In the field, he had the broad view of creation laid before him, to help his meditation, and to excite all his powers of devotion, Psalm viii. 3, 4.

4. A dispensation of providence he met with, when at this duty. "He saw, and behold the camels were coming." Some observe here, how ready some worldly business is to call us away, when we are at our duty. It is true, however, I think this was a sign of God's accepting of his duty; and O how sweet is it, when a mercy coming to us, finds us at our duty. I think we may say to it then, as Jacob to Esau, at their meeting, "I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God."

Doctrine. Meditation is a necessary duty, to the performance of which, people should set themselves; seriously making choice of such times and places for it, as the duty may be gone about with the best advantage.

I shall first explain the duty, and then apply the subject.

I. I am to shew what meditation is. It is twofold. 1. Occasional; which is a meditation of some spiritual thing arising from such occasions as offer themselves, and is of such a nature as ejaculatory prayer, a short occasional thought.

II. Fixed and solemn; when the soul deliberately sets itself to think upon some spiritual thing, in order to the bettering of the heart thereby. This is the meditation in the text, in which three things are to be considered.

1. A choice of some spiritual subject to meditate upon. Many meditate upon sin with delight, and so ride post to hell with little din. "He deviseth mischief upon his bed, he setteth himself in a way that is not good: he abhorreth not evil." Others employ their thoughts, only in the meditation of things of the world. But he that would meditate aright, must choose some spiritual subject to think upon. And it is needful we should select some one, and not abide in generals, Psalm lxiii. 6; Song i. 4.

2. A calling in of the heart from all other objects. The mind of man is too narrow to be taken up to purpose about many things at once, especially with thoughts of divers kinds; therefore prays David, "Unite my heart to fear thy name."

3. Employing the heart on the spiritual subject so chosen, to think upon it, study it, and seriously consider of it; to lay it before our understandings, so as to move our affections, and improve our hearts.

II. Let us apply the subject. I exhort you to make conscience of this duty of meditation, and particularly of fixed meditation; setting yourselves as solemnly to it, as to prayer and other duties.

MOTIVE 1. Consider it is the command of God. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed." "And meditate upon these things." says Paul to Timothy. Why do you perform other duties, but because God commands you? Well, he that bids you do other duties, bids you do this also. Remember "you shall not be ashamed, when you have respect to all his commandments." If the command of God hath due weight with you in one case, it will have weight in all, James ii. 10, 11.

2. It is made desirable, by the testimony which it hath from the practice of the people of God. Thus was Isaac employed. Thus David, Psalm lxiii. 6. Yea, David puts it in the description of the godly man, "that he meditates on the law of God day and night."

3. It is of notable use for a Christian's improvement. It much increases knowledge: "I have more understanding," says David, "than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation." It is the way to comfort under affliction. When David's enemies plotted against him, "thy servant," says he, "did meditate in thy statutes." It makes a Christian tender in his way. "I will meditate on thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways." It gives a Christian a sweet relish of the goodness of God, Psalm lxiii. 5, 6.

Now I would lay before you some directions, in order to your right managing of this work.

1. Habituate yourself to occasional meditation, to take up a holy meditation on things that you see or hear, turning them to a spiritual use. This was the practice of Christ, to spiritualize worldly things. None have fairer occasion of it than husbandmen, whose calling is so much spiritualized in the Scripture.

2. If your occasions will permit, and sometimes they will, retire by yourselves for solemn meditation, so as you may go about it without disturbance. But sometimes a man may have good occasion for meditation, even while at his employment in the world.

3. Make choice of some spiritual matter to meditate upon. Fix this in the first place, that so you may not be rambling from one thing to another. There is great variety of subjects: God; Christ; his sufferings; the love of God; death; judgment; heaven, hell; eternity; the graces of the Spirit, faith, love, hope; the word and works of God.

4. Begin with a short and earnest prayer; either ejaculatory, or more solemn. Pray as David: "O Lord, open mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law."

5. When you enter on the duty, be resolute to go through with it, for Satan will strive to divert you; and that you may not want matter, take these few rules: When you enter upon a subject of meditation, if it will bear it, observe,

1. To begin with a description of the thing, what it is; as what God, faith, love is; or whatever be the matter of meditation.

2. If there be sundry kinds of these, observe them; as faith feigned, or unfeigned.

3. Consider the causes.

4. The effects.

5. Its properties.

6. Its opposites.

7. What it is compared to.

Lastly, Scriptural testimonies concerning it.

6, To think and enlarge on the subject, as that your heart may be affected and touched with it. Here I would advise you: 1. To get suitable affection and relish of it in your souls. 2. To bewail the want of that relish. 3. To desire that, of the want of which you complain. 4. Confess your inability to do for yourself what you wish to have. 5. Petition for the Lord's working it in you. *Lastly*, Believe the Lord will grant your request.

7. Conclude all with thankfulness to the Lord, and committing yourself to him.

Lastly, Take all outward helps you can, for right managing of the duty; and because the sight of the eyes may divert you, if need be go into the dark, or shut your eyes. And if you cannot get your heart kept, while your tongue is not employed, stand not to speak your meditation any way, so as you be not overheard. The Hebrew word in the text, signifies both meditation and speaking.

To make this more plain to you, I will give you a short meditation on death, enlarged according to these rules.

Lord, gather my thoughts, that I may profitably meditate on this, which will gather me and all mankind into the grave at length; and open mine eyes to see it, before I feel it. O my soul! what is death? It is a dissolution of soul and body; a parting of these two loving companions, which God did unite in the womb. Consider, O my soul! there is a twofold death, violent and natural; and which of them may be my lot I do not know. Each of these may be done several ways. Either this life of mine must go as a candle that is blown out, or else will waste with diseases or age till like a

candle, it die out of itself, when the wick and grease are consumed. But O! what are the causes of death? Why, the cause is in myself. I bear about the seeds of so many diseases, as will cut me off at length, but the first cause of all is sin, that brought death into the world with it. Seeing I have sinned, I must die. And now, my soul, cast thine eyes on the effects of death. How does the approach of this grim messenger fill all the body with pains, make the eyes stare, and the face grow pale; and when he gives his stroke, the breath goes, the soul departs, the body is left a lump of lifeless clay. While friends fall a weeping that the dead is gone, and they will see him no more in the land of the living. But what are the properties of death? Why, it is certain, it is uncertain. It is terrible in its most pleasant shape. It is a way we can but once go; if it once go wrong, we cannot put it right. O my soul! what are the opposites of it? Even life which we now enjoy here, which is sweet; and eternal life in glory, where we shall be liable to no more death. And why should I forget the death of Christ that unstings it, according to that, Hos. xiii. 14. What is death like? To what may I compare it? It is like the blowing out or wasting of a candle. Like the Egyptian jailor, that opened the prison door to the baker and butler, restoring the one to the court, and sending the other to the gibbet. What say the Scriptures? They tell me, "it is appointed unto all men once to die."

Now, O my soul! how terrible is death? What a king of terrors is this? What need of preparation for it? But alas! how little is my hard heart touched with the consideration of this? How little am I affected with this, which I must feel? O that I were suitably affected with it? that I were wise, to consider my latter end! But alas! I cannot command this of myself, I cannot have one serious thought of it! I may as well dig through a rock with my nails, as think to affect mine own heart with it. But, O Lord, to thee I make my request. Do thou give me a heart duly touched with it. Thou hast prepared death for me; prepare me for it. And I desire to believe thou wilt do it, for thou workest all our works in us. Blessed be the Lord, that has opened a way, how we may be delivered of its sting. And so, into thy hands, I commit my spirit. Be my God and guide even unto death. Amen.

June 15, 1707.

FAREWELL SERMON, AT SIMPRIN.

SERMOM XL.

JOHN vii. 37,

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

OUR Lord having kept the feast with the Jews for several days, and having about the midst of it begun to teach in the temple, and being now to part, gives them the parting word in the text. In which there is,

1. A large offer of himself, which he makes to them. He had dealt with them before, but he is resolved they shall have a large offer before they part. It was a custom among the Jews, on the last day of the feast, to draw water joyfully, out of the fountain of Siloam; therefore Christ offers himself to them, under the notion of a fountain of water, inviting all thirsty sinners to come to him; that is, believe on him, as he himself interprets it, ver. 38. To drink, that is, to make use of him for the supply of their needs. The offer is large, none are excluded. If any man thirst, be but sensible of wants and desire supply, here he may have it.

2. The time when he makes this offer. More generally, it was at the feast, namely, of tabernacles, John vii. 2. This was one of these three feasts, at which all the males of the Jews were to appear before the Lord, at Jerusalem, Deut. xvi. 16. Of this feast we have an account, Levit. xxiii. 33. More particularly, the last day of the feast; that is, the eight day, which was the great day; that is, a solemn day, which was to be observed as a sabbath, and on it there was to be a holy convocation. It was a joyful feast and lasted long, yet it has a last day. The people had been together seven days, and now, on the eighth, they were to part; and while this feast is upon the close, Christ invites them to a more lasting feast, where the table should never be drawn, even to feed on himself. And so the best wine comes last.

3. The way in which he delivered this discourse. It was standing, though he often sat while he taught. But at this time, he stood and cried. The reason may be, because of the multitude of hearers, but especially to denote his earnestness with them at parting. The

matter was so important, and it was so that in that manner, they were not soon to hear more.

DOCTRINE. If any man be under soul thirst, Christ bids him welcome to come to him and drink. Or needy sinners are welcome to Christ, to get supply of all their wants. Here we shall shew,

I. Who they are, that are invited.

II. To what they are invited.

III. I shall confirm the point. We are then,

I. To shew who they are, that are invited. It is any man that thirsts. There is a bodily and a soul thirst. It is the spiritual thirst that is here meant. In all thirst there are two things:

1. Sense of want. The thirsty soul wants something, and knows that it wants. Every man is sensible that he is not self-sufficient, that he labours under some defects, and must be supplied from some quarter or another; but it is not every one that knows to what quarter to go for supply.

2. Desire of supply. The thirsty soul craves what may supply its needs, as the hungry infant seeks for the breast. The soul of man is ever desiring, till it meet with that which doth fully satisfy its desires. The object of this thirsting is twofold:

1. The end where the soul may rest, and that is happiness. This every man thirsts after. All desire to be happy. A man cannot cease to desire to be a happy man; though, without grace, he cannot go the right way to obtain it.

2. The means leading to this end. This follows upon the other. The man that desires to be at the journey's end, desires also to go in the way, though perhaps he mistake it. He that desires refreshment, desires also to drink, though he may by ignorance take a cup of poison, instead of proper drink.

Now there is a twofold thirsting desire of these things:

1. One that is natural, and therefore is common to all men. It is as natural for a man to desire to be happy and to get satisfaction, as it is for him to breathe. And upon supposition that the man lives under the gospel, and learns that Christ and grace are the means of happiness, he will thirst after these in a natural way, as a bridge to carry him over God's wrath, John vi. 34; Matth. xxv; Num. xxiii. 10. But it is the plague of all natural men, they see not the excellency of Christ and grace, nor the emptiness of the creatures; hence they practically mistake the way to happiness, and thirst after it, seeking it in the world and their lusts, crying, "Who will shew us any good?" Having lost God, they are like a blind thirsty man, still drawing at empty cisterns. Here is a thirst, but not that which has the promise of being satisfied, Matth. v. 6.

Yet to them that have it, this invitation is directed: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Verse 2. "Wherefore do ye spend money, for that which is not bread; and your labour, for that which satisfieth not. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good; and let your soul delight itself in fatness." This sets them right, and lets them see a pure fountain.

2. One that is supernatural, and therefore is only given to the elect of God, whose hearts the hand of God hath touched. Thus touched, they are made to cry, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Thus, these that cared as little for Christ as others do, now long for him. There is a flame of desires raised in their souls, after the Lord, by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness shining into their souls. So that thirst is for him, for himself; for what he is, as well as for what he has. "Unto them which believe, he is precious." The sight of his excellency has ravished the heart. The soul sees a beauty in him. This desire cannot be satisfied without him. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God." Clothe a thirsty man with scarlet, and fill his pockets with gold, yet nothing but drink can satisfy him. The soul cannot take up its rest short of Christ. The carrion of the creatures cannot satisfy it. To such, none but Christ will suffice. The soul is resolute for him. Like Jacob, "they will not let him go, till he bless them;" and like the woman of Canaan they will not take a denial, till he grant their desire. Therefore their earnestness makes them break through all difficulties, like David's worthies to the well of Bethlehem. Their desire, indeed, is humble before him; "for to the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet." A hungry man is not nice. A crumb that falls from the table, will be great in their eyes. The prodigal is willing to be placed among his Father's hired servants. We proceed,

II. To shew to what they are invited.

1. They are invited to come to Christ. "If any man thirst," says Jesus, "let him come to me." This means to believe on him, to take him and close with him, ver. 33. Unbelief is a departing from the living God, so faith is a coming back again to God in Christ. In all coming there are two terms. Look how we departed from the Lord. "It was by forsaking him, the fountain of living waters, and hewing out for yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Hence we may describe faith to be the coming of the soul from the broken cisterns of created things to a full Christ, Song iv. 8. All things in the world are empty and unsatis-

factory to the soul. We must go out of ourselves, our sins, our lawful and unlawful comforts, and take up our rest in Christ, receiving him for and instead of all. This is that act of faith which unites us to Christ.

2. We are invited to come to him and drink. "Let him come to me," says Jesus, "and *drink*." Our thirsty souls are desired to drink here. This spiritual drinking is also an act of faith, and denotes the soul's really and actually making use of Christ, for the supply of its wants. This points at three things in Christ.

1. The fulness that is in him for needy sinners. He is the well of living water, that is ever full and overfloweth; who is able to fill up all the wants of all that will come to him. "For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." "Yea, in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." There is in him a fulness of merit. His blood cleanseth from all sin. There is a fulness of guilt on all of us. Our hearts, lips, and lives are all full of sin. Tears, prayers and rivers of oil, cannot wipe it away; but in Christ there is a fulness of merit, to take it off completely. What will not the blood of God do? "Here is a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness." The rock is struck, behold the water gusheth out. There is a sea to overwhelm it. "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." And this redeems a forfeited heaven. There is also a fulness of Spirit in him, to take away the stain and power of sin in us." "The Spirit is given to him without measure." Who are so dead, but the Spirit of life can quicken them? who so defiled, but the Spirit of glory resting on them will cleanse, Isa. xli. 17. There is abundance of spirit in our head, to actuate all the members. There is, moreover, a fulness of grace in him, John i. 16. He is the fountain and storehouse of all grace, where there is no lack. From him all the saints on earth, and all in heaven, have derived their graces: And yet there is bread enough.

2. It hath respect to the suitableness of Christ to the case of sinners; as drink is suited to the case of a thirsty man. There is in him a suitable remedy for every disorder. Here the dead soul may have life; the blind, light; the naked, a garment; the poor, riches; the scorched soul, refreshment; the pained, ease; the weak, strength. Whatever be their case in life, death, time, eternity, prosperity or adversity, there is every thing suitable in him.

3. It points at his satisfactoriness. "Whosoever," saith Christ, "drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." The hungry infant set upon the

breast, rests there, and desires no more. The soul that is thirsty, if it will come hither, may suck at the breasts of divine all-sufficiency in Christ. It is enough, said Jacob, Joseph liveth, Heb. iii. 17, 18; Phil. iv. 18. When all is gone, all the cisterns run dry, here is enough. Christ himself is able to satisfy the soul: "Whom have in I heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." Now this is spiritual drinking, or actual use-making of Christ for supply of our wants, implies these three things.

1. The soul's going out of itself, as to the supply of that particular want or wants, it labours under, renouncing all confidence in itself, or any creature, Jer. xvii. 5. To be sensible of our own emptiness and inability to help ourselves, is a great step to supply.

2. The soul's going out in a desire after supply from the Lord Jesus, upon his invitation. "Open," says he, "thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." This is the soul's placing its mouth at the fountain; and the conduit pipe to the well of living water. Many a time the poor soul is like Hagar, in a very hopeless case, till the Lord lets them see this well, to which they go and drink for their refreshment.

3. Believing application of Christ to the soul, and of that fulness that is in him, to our particular cases. Though the thirsty man gape for water, and lie down at the fountain, if he take not a draught of the water, he will not be refreshed. Our clothes will not cover us, unless we put them on; nor fire warm us, unless we approach it. This consists in three things:

1. In catching hold of the promise suited to their case. The soul must take hold of the promise, though it be with a trembling hand, Gen. xxxii. 10. The promises are the staves, with which the traveller to Zion supports himself. I confess the soul will sometimes be disputing itself out of the promise. They cannot see it to be theirs. But when they begin to sink, they will even catch hold of it again, at all adventures.

2. In venturing their case upon the promise and proposed supply. So Peter ventured on Christ for support, and so set his foot on the water. Is the soul thirsting for pardon or strength, then the soul is ventured on the blood of Christ, and on the grace of Christ, which is promised to be sufficient for them.

3. Confidence of Christ's answering their necessities, for he hath said, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." This confidence is stronger or weaker, according to the measure of faith. They that expect nothing, can get nothing. We must ask in faith, nothing wavering. As Peter's confidence failed, he sank. He was not drowned, because he had some faith; but almost drowned, because he had but little faith. Now,

III. To confirm this point, I will only lay before you:

I. That you have his word for your welcome. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," Rev. iii. 20. It is the word of the living God, you may venture on it. It is a tried word. All the saints in glory, and on earth, have tried it, and it never failed one of them. Turn over your Bibles, look the history of past times, who ever died at his door. Will you go where others have gone before you, and succeeded. If you perish, you perish; but you will be the first, for none perish that trust in him.

2. You have his oath for it. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" If you will not venture welcome upon his word, yet you may do it upon his oath. O wonderful condescension! that he should so far yield to loose the objections of unbelief, and to take away the strife between himself and unbelieving wretches.

Use. And now in this last day of the feast, I do in the name of the Lord, invite you all, old and young, to come to Christ and drink, and fetch supply for your souls. We make this proclamation this once more, from this place. "If any man thirst, let him come to Jesus and drink."

Motive 1. The supply of the needs of poor sinners, is the great end of the mystery of Christ, next to his glory? Why was he sent into the world? Why came he, but to save sinners? Why is he preached, but that sinners may come to him? He is lifted up on the pole of the gospel, that sinners may look to him, and be saved. He is a fountain opened, that sinners may come and drink. The rose of the field, that all who will, may pluck. And will you dare to slight him any more?

2. He is able to supply all your wants, however great they can be. Sometimes people meet with a loss that they think will never be made up again. But Christ "is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him." Are you all over filthy? there is water here to wash you; streams, Isa. xxxv. 6; a fountain, Zech. xiii. 1; rivers, Isa. xli. 18; a sea, and depths of the sea, Micah vii. 18. Is misery with you? mercy is with him; a multitude of mercies, Psal. li. 1. If one mercy will not do, "mercy shall be built up," one laid upon another, Psal. lxxxix. 2. Are your sins deep as hell? "So great is his mercy towards us, that he delivers our souls from the lowest hell." Are your sins as high as heaven? "The Lord's mercy is in the heavens."

3. Christ is a fountain that will never run dry. The creatures, all of them, are broken cisterns. Little they can hold, and that

little is soon exhausted. What can they do for us at best and many times they leave us in the greatest straits. All must part. Christ is a fountain that will serve you at all times, in all cases, through time and eternity.

2. Consider your need of him. How will you live or die without him? Does not the sick man need the physician? How will you get a pardon, peace with God, strength for duty, without him?

5. If you will come now, you will get a full feast above, and drink of the rivers of God's pleasures for evermore, Rev. vii. 16, 17.

Lastly, Remember Christ is in your offer this day. "If any man thirst," &c. This cuts off all exceptions, and makes the offer particular, therefore delay no longer. "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

And now I would turn my speech to you of this generation. Dearly beloved, the text tells us, that the most joyful feast of ordinances in the world, may have an end. God will have a difference betwixt the lower and the upper house. People may be in hazard of loathing their food, and they must fast a while to find their appetites again. We have had now, for near eight years, a feast of ordinances together, and now the last day of that feast is come. I hope your table shall be again covered to greater advantage, seeing God has children here to feed. But now I would have you to reflect,

1. On the entertainment you have had at this feast: both ordinary, at the preaching of the word; and extraordinary, at the sacraments. When I entered on the ministry here, I began and preached man's natural state, for the first eleven months; then I preached Christ the remedy. I have withheld nothing from you of the whole counsel of God, so far as I knew it, and was necessary for you. I have told you the danger of neglecting the remedy, and am free of the blood of all men.

2. How it has been with you under the means. If any have been brought to acquaintance with Christ and themselves, and have got their souls refreshed, bless God for it. Where it has been otherwise, now mourn before the Lord for it.

I have not many advices to leave you, having about half a year ago been pressed in my spirit, before I knew what way I would be disposed of, to preach some things to you; which I began then, and finished just the last Lord's day I was here. I will put you in mind of them: I exhorted you to beware of the evils of the tongue, &c., &c.

Take this removal kindly out of the Lord's hand. Search out the cause of it, sisting your consciences before the Lord. I think it

will be safest for every man to leave his complaint on himself. It is a small thing for me, to be judged of men. God knows the heart, and will bring secret things to light. Some say, I needed not have gone away, but if I would. If my heart deceive me not, it is several years since I gave up with mine own will, and in this I have followed what I took to be God's will. As I came to this place under a sense of a call from God, and durst not do otherwise; so I go from it under a sense of God's call, which for my soul I durst not disobey, whatever difficulties I may meet with, though I should die at the end of it. Pray for a minister from the Lord. Pray in secret. Meet together, and pray for one. And, in the meantime, make conscience of family duties; watch over one another, and live in peace together.

I leave my testimony to the doctrine of the confession of faith, as the doctrine of Christ; and against the errors of the time. And I exhort you to cleave to that doctrine. I give my testimony to the covenanted work of reformation, and believe that the national and the solemn league and covenant were of God; and I exhort you to cleave thereto, against popery, prelacy, superstition and ceremonies. And mourn for this, that by the union, a nail is sent from Scotland, to fix the Dagon of the English hierarchy in its place in our country.

Above all, I exhort you to go to Christ, and be daily making use of him, for the supply of all your wants. I dare not say I have been useless here. I hope you and I will not forget the many sweet days we have had in this place. Christ has been with us at sermons, both on sabbath days and week days. We have had much of his presence at communions, and I bless God that ever put it in my heart to celebrate the sacrament in the winter. I hope you will particularly remember, and never forget the sabbath after our last communion.

I have come so far short of my duty to you as a minister, that if God should enter into judgment with me on that account, I should undoubtedly be damned. But for pardon, I flee to the same blood of Jesus Christ, which I have preached to you. And I advise you to take the same course with respect to your shortcomings. Now, I beseech you, pray for me; and God forbid that I should cease to pray for you, that Simprin may always be as a field that the Lord hath blessed. Now I will say no more, but conclude with the words of the apostle, Acts xx. 32, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified." Amen.

THE

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS

OF

REAL CHRISTIANS.

Being the substance of several Sermons.

PHILIP. iii. 3,

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

THE apostle here gives a reason why he had called those false teachers, against whom he cautions the Philippians, the concision; viz. because he and all true believers, and not they, had the best claim to circumcision. In the words there are two things.

I. A position: "We are the circumcision."

II. The proof of it; taken from the description of the true circumcision, which agrees to believers, and them only.

In the position we have,

1. The party to whom the honourable controverted character belongs: We. Which includes, (1.) The apostle himself, who was circumcised in the flesh, ver. 5. (2.) The Philippian Church, to whom he speaks; who being of the Gentiles, were not circumcised in the flesh; which was the great quarrel the false apostles had with them. Yet this character doth not comprehend all of the church of Philippi; but the saints among them, to whom the following description agreed, and therefore all believers; that is, all that "worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

2. That character itself; "the circumcision, *i. e.* the circumcised people, Rom. xv. 8. Now, they were not the circumcised in the flesh; therefore it is meant of their circumcision in the spirit. See the distinction, Rom. ii. 29, "He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." They had the thing signified by circumcision; while others that boasted of

circumcision, had only the bare outward sign. And as the thing is far better than the sign of it, so they deserved the name best.

Before we proceed farther, we may deduce a few doctrinal observations from this first part of the verse.

Doctrine 1. The sacraments of the Old and New Testament are in substance the same. The baptized Philippians, who were baptized with the Holy Ghost, as well as with water, are said to be circumcised. And so the apostle attributes our baptism and the Lord's supper after a sort to the church of the Jews; 1 Cor. x. 1, 2, 3, 4, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: (For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ)." As the covenant was always the same in substance, so the seals of it were the same too. I note this, to guard against the Popish error, in making the sacraments of the Old Testament only shadow forth that grace which the sacraments of the New do confer, according to them; and that they were not the same in efficacy.

Doctrine 2. The reality of that which seducers do pretend unto, will more readily be found in those that conscientiously oppose them. These men run down the apostle, and other believers, in the point of circumcision; giving out themselves only for the circumcised ones. But the apostle proves they had a better claim to it, than those that made all the noise about it. Thus the works of holiness are to be found more with those that press justification by faith, than with others who would be looked on as the great patrons of good works.

Use. Be not then deceived with fair speeches, but examine matters to the bottom; for often do those that have the highest pretences to right on their side, go farthest from it. And think it no uncouth thing, to find those who have deserted the principles of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in their separation, give out themselves for the only adherents thereto.*

Doctrine 3. The sign in religion without the thing signified, is little worth. They are but the concision, and deserve no other

* The author means here the people called Old Dissenters, the followers of Mr. M'Millan; who are also the people immediately levelled against in his printed sermon on schism.

name, that have only circumcision in the flesh. We are the circumcision that have the thing signified thereby.

To confirm this, consider,

1. All it can do is but to give a name before men, which they lose before God: Rom. ii. 28, 29, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." Christians we will be called amongst men, upon our receiving the sign of it; but we will be but as the children of the Ethiopian before the Lord, if we have no more. It may give us an honourable title in the world, but it is but an empty title before God.

2. The sign is but a mere external thing, on which nothing of weight for salvation can hang: it is too little to make any saving difference betwixt them that have it, and others that want it. And therefore when the Lord comes to judgment, he throws down all together, Jer. ix. 25, 26; for he looks not to the outward appearance, to lay any weight upon it, but to the heart.

3. The sign in religion without the thing signified, is but an inefficacious thing; as a body without a spirit. The sacraments have each two parts, the sign, and the thing signified, sacramentally united. He then that hath got the sign only, hath only the half, and the meanest half too. Sacraments are seals of the covenant; but where there is no covenant, there can be no seal: and what avails a seal at a blank? They apply Christ to believers; but where there is no receiving, how can they apply?

4. As men may in Christ's livery abide in the devil's service, so they may and will go with it into the place prepared for the devil and his angels, if they have not the thing signified. Thus our Lord, Luke xiii. 26, 27, tells us, that some shall say to him at the last day, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets;" but that he shall say unto such, "I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Some are circumcised, and yet are dogs, ver. 2. Of this chapter, whose place is without. As to this privilege, avail it may to men's greater condemnation, but no further.

For Application: Is the sacramental sign little worth without the thing signified thereby? then I would have you take a back-look of your baptism and communicating. For to change the word into that which the gospel gives, we may say, We, and only we, are the baptized, the communicants, that "worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." For there are two great truths which plainly follow from this,

1. Baptism with water without being baptized by the Holy Ghost is little worth. It is the dreadful sin of the generation, that they never reflect seriously on their baptism. Hence are two great evils. (1.) They are children of Belial, they go without a yoke. They live as if they had never sworn allegiance to the King of heaven, but were entirely their own, and none Lord over them. (2.) They will be children of Belial, they will go without a yoke. They will not renew their baptismal vows in the sacrament of the supper, nor prepare themselves thereto. They will come under any covenant or engagement to men to advance their worldly interest; but they will not come under engagements to the Lord. They are obliged to their parents' care in their infancy, that got them baptized; but if they had been yet unbaptized, and would act like themselves, they would refuse and slight baptism, as well as the other sacrament. But let me lay home to the consciences of baptized persons, a few queries touching their baptism.

1*st*, In the general. It is true, ye are washed with water; but are ye baptized indeed? Ye have got the sign, but have ye got the thing signified? Baptized ye were with water, but were ye ever to this day baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire; *i. e.* the Holy Ghost working like fire? Alas! that universal coldness in the things of God in our affections, says, that as to most men, the fire of God's Spirit never came on them yet.

2*dly*, But more particularly, I would ask you,

(1.) Hast thou ever yet seen thy natural pollution, that universal defilement of thy whole man, how that Adam left thee lying in thy blood, and a child of wrath? Eph. ii. 3. Hast thou ever yet seen the filth of sin so deep in thy nature and life, that no tears, prayers, &c. of thine, but only the blood and Spirit of Christ, could wash thee? In baptism there is a profession of all this. If thou hast not seen this, what avails thy baptism? why wast thou washed at all with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?

(2.) Wast thou ever yet made partaker of the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; that is, the thing signified by baptism, Tit. iii. 5. 6? Alas! what avails the washing of the body with water while the blood of Christ has never been sprinkled on the conscience, nor the water of the Spirit of Christ poured on the filthy soul, John iii. 5? Alas! I fear many may in this matter make that confession of their faith, Acts xix. 2. "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost:" and therefore I would say, ver. 3. "Unto what then were ye baptized? They know nothing about regeneration, nor the Spirit's work upon the soul.

(3.) Were ye ever cut off from the old stock of Adam, and ingrafted into Christ? 1 Cor. xii. 13. Ye will then be knit to Christ by the Spirit and faith; ye will be branches of him, bringing forth the fruits of holiness by him; living in and on him, living by faith. Ah! baptized in the name of Christ, and yet not in Christ, but without Christ, and without God in the world, makes sad work.

(4.) Are lusts living and reigning; or are they dying, and your souls living a new life? Rom. vi. 4, 5. The water was cast on you indeed, as the earth on a dead corpse; but what avails that if ye never yet died to sin? Ye have got free of the water cast on you at baptism, as he that rises out of the grave gets free of the earth; but what avails it if ye be dead in sin still, and alienated from the life of God? Ah! what are most of us but walking ghosts?

2. Communicating in the Lord's supper without the thing signified, is little worth. To be partakers of the bread of the Lord, without being partakers of the bread which is the Lord, will go but a small length.

1*st*, Have ye indeed eaten Christ's flesh and drank his blood by faith? Had ye an appetite after Christ, and have ye relished the sweetness of Christ, and the sweetness of every part of Christ, as one does of the bread which he eats; and have your souls knit with him, and received life, sap, and strength from him for your nourishment? Ah! what avails bread and wine without this?

2*dly*, Do you live by him? John vi. 57. Is Christ the staff and comfort of your souls? Have ye set on to live the life of new obedience? It is from him ye draw influences for actuating grace, and for your growth? Do ye "worship God in Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh?" then, and not otherwise, are ye the circumcision.

DOCTRINE 4. ult. "Believers in Christ are the true circumcision." They have that in the spirit, which the Jews by this ordinance had in the letter. To illustrate this, consider,

1. Circumcision was a token of God's covenant, Gen. xvii. 11. which see, ver. 7, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" This is the privilege of every believer; he is in covenant with God, God is his God. O what a privilege is this, to be confederate with heaven, yea, to have God himself to be ours, heirs of God; so that God is the heritage! "This honour have all the saints."

2. Circumcision distinguished the Jews from others, as God's people from those that were not his, Gen. xvii. 14. So are believers

God's Israel, his peculiar people, his jewels, his garden; while the rest of the world are but as his out-field. They have the special presence of God with them, his peculiar love, care pretection, &c.; and with Israel, are not numbered by him among the nations.

3. Circumcision was the cutting off of a part of the flesh; signifying that which believers have as their privilege as well as duty, "the putting off of the body of sins, Col. ii. 11. Thus believers have put off the old man with his deeds. This is begun in regeneration, and carried on in gradual sanctification; their lusts are cut off, and cast from them in some measure. Their hearts are circumcised to love the Lord, so as they have new affections; their ears to hear his voice, which could not reach them before; and their lips to speak holily, and for God.

4. Circumcision was a bloody ordinance; witness Zipporah, who "took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son, and said, Surely a bloody husband thou art to me; A bloody husband thou art because of the circumcision." So it is through the blood of Christ, the blood of the everlasting covenant, that the elect become God's people. They come to all their privileges by the way of blood: so that they may write on the covenant, and all their privileges, from the greatest seat in heaven, to the meanest drop of water on earth, The price of blood.

4. Hence it was a painful ordinance. So is the believer's mortication of his lusts, Gal. v. 24. They are naturally addicted to the ways of the flesh as well as others; but they are helped with grace to cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes, however unpleasant that work is to corrupt nature.

6. It was the flesh of the foreskin that was cut off, teaching them how sin is propagated by ordinary generation; and in true believers, the axe of mortification is laid not only to the branches, but to the root of the tree; the true circumcision reaching a stroke not only to particular lusts, but to the sin of our nature, Gal. v. 24.

7. It was in a secret part of the body. So true circumcision is that of the heart in believers, Rom. ii. 29. They are not outside Christians only but the hidden man of the heart is for God: and the King's daughter is all-glorious within.

8. It sealed the covenant of promises, particularly that of the righteousness of faith, Rom. iv. and of Canaan's land. So are they heirs of the heavenly Canaan, and that righteousness is theirs.

9. *Lastly*, It was an engagement to duty on them; so is the grace of God on believers a singular engagement to duty.

INFERENCE 1. Then be among believers who will now, they shall for ever be cut off from among them that are not such as they. Woe to the hypocritical professor who is not thus honoured.

2. Then are all believers Abraham's spiritual seed, and heirs according to the promise. They are the Israel of God, having all those privileges in spirit and truth, that the Israel according to the flesh had in the latter; which may help them comfortably to read and apply those glorious things spoke of Israel in the Old Testament. Hence believers are called a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," 1 Pet. ii. 9.

3. Then let the saints keep at a distance from the profane world, Acts x. 28, and xi. 3. They whom God has distinguished from others, should not mix themselves, with Ephraim, among the people Even a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

4. *Lastly*, Then distinguish yourselves from others by your holy life. Let it appear that ye are circumcised in heart, lip, and life; that sin has got a root-stroke, and the lusts thereof cut off. And so I come to the,

II. *Second* thing, the proof of the position, contained in a description of the true circumcision; that is, of the true people of God, real saints. There are many disputes in the world concerning this; but the apostle lays down a rule for deciding the controversy. He gives three distinguishing characters of God's people. 1. If ye consider their worship, they worship God in spirit; 2. their joy, that is in Christ. 3. their confidence, they have none in the flesh." Whosoever can make good his claim to these, is a true Christian.

I. The *first* character of a saint is, he is one that "worships God in the spirit." In which there are three things. 1. He is a worshipper, and so is distinguished from Atheists. 2. The object of his worship is the true God; and so is distinguished from idolaters, that worship any other than the true God. 3. The manner of it; in the spirit; and so is distinguished from hypocrites.

DOCTRINE. Those, and only those, are God's people, true saints, real Christians, who worship God in the spirit.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What it is to worship God in the spirit.

II. That this worshipping of God in spirit, is a distinguishing mark of a true Christian.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I shall shew "what it is to worship God in the spirit." It is, in a word, to give spiritual worship to God, to worship him, and be spiritual in the worship. Now, this hath a respect to two things.

First, It hath a respect to the whole of our service and obedience to God in our whole conversation. God, as our great Master, hath given us a law; in keeping that law, and obeying it in our

whole conversation, lies our service to God. The parts of it are two; holiness, comprehending our duty to God; righteousness, comprehending that to our neighbour. We have both these in one Scripture, viz. Luke i. 74, 75, "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousnes before him, all the days of our life." It is the same words as in our text, which might be, and is by some rendered, "that serve God in Spirit," viz. not only in the acts of immediate worship, but in the whole of their course. And truly the Christian life is as it were one continued act of worship, where all their actions, natural, civil, and religious, meet in God: and is therefore called "a serving of God day and night, Acts xxvi. 7; Rev. vii. 15, in allusion to the priests and Levites that were always about the temple, Psalm cxxxiv. 1; and no wonder, for they are priests unto God. Second table duties are turned by them into first: James i. 27, "Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. Heb. xiii. 16; But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Now, the Christian is spiritual in these things, Rom. i. 9. We must preach in the spirit, as well as pray in the spirit, Eph. v. 21; and vi. 6.

Secondly, It hath respect to those duties of religion which are parts of worship properly so called, as prayer, praise, &c. A true Christian will make conscience of these; he will worship God, and that in the spirit. If he pray, he will pray in the spirit, praise, and hear in the spirit. Now, the worshipping of God in spirit lies in these two.

1. The true Christian worshipping God, worships him with his heart, soul, and spirit, and not with his body only. Hence the apostle says, Rom. i. 9, that he "served God with his spirit in the gospel of his Son." The Jews in our Saviour's days had religion extremely sunk among them: it was turned into mere bodily exercise, for the most part: therefore Christ tells them, John iv. 24, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." Now, this implies these things.

1*st*, The true Christian is an internal worshipper of God. There is an external worship called for in the second commandment, such as hearing, praying with the voice, &c. There is also an internal worship called for by the first commandment. In outward worship the body acts its part, in the inward the soul only acts. This lies in the soul's fearing, loving, trusting, depending on God, &c. which are the vital parts of practical godliness. The true Christian's soul is

the temple of God; and in the Christian's heart, and there only, is God thus worshipped. They make din enough in the outer court with worship to God, who never worship God there; while self, the creature, and lusts as the abomination of desolation, stand in the holy place of the heart.

2*dly*, The true Christian joins inward to outward worship, and so body and spirit go on jointly. Hence the apostle exhorts, as 1 Cor. vi. 20, to "glorify God in the body, and in the spirit, which are God's." And as the body without the soul, so outward without inward worship is but a loathsome, lifeless lump, Matth. xv. 7, 8. It is not praying, but praying in the spirit, that is the distinguishing character of a Christian. Then do men worship God in spirit, when their hearts go with their bodies before the Lord, when the soul is humbled before the Lord while the knees are bowed in his presence, when with the lifting up of the hands the affections are lifted towards the Lord. O what avails the bowing of the knees, while the heart remains stout against the Lord; the moving of the lips, while no moving of agreeable affections; hearing of the word with the ear, while the soul is like a deaf adder; petitions of good things, without sincere desires of them from the heart; confessions of sin, without shame, and grief, and hatred of it; thanksgivings, without a due sense of mercies? It is but lip-labour.

3*dly*, The true Christian aims at, and in some measure attains the spirituality of worship. The spirit of the Christian, in worshipping God, is employed in that part whereof it alone is capable; not only to do the thing, but to do it in a right manner, which is the spirituality of worship. As we worship God with our bodies, not only using them in his service, but composing them to an allowable outward gesture; so we worship God in our spirits, while they are not only employed in conversing with God, and giving material obedience to his commandments, but also acting in those things in the manner prescribed by himself. Now, there are four things here principally that belong to the worshipping God in spirit, without which the very motions of our spirit, though good in themselves, in worship, would be but carnal. So the apostle calls his old obeying of the law flesh, Philip. iii. 6, compared with ver. 4.

(1.) The true Christian discerns the commandment, and acts in worshipping God from a sense of it. For "whatsoever is not of faith, is sin," Rom. xiv. 23. He believes so and so, because God has said it; and does so and so, because God has bid it, Psal. cxix. 115; John v. 30. The will of God, to a Christian, will not only be the rule, but the reason of his worship; hence the hardest piece of it is not neglected; as we find in the case of Abraham's offering Isaac, Gen. xxii.

(2.) The true Christian worships the Lord out of love to him: Heb. vi. 10, "God is not unrighteous," says the apostle, "to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name," &c. Hence the whole of our service to God comes under the name of love in the sum of the commandments. If the domineering principle in our worship be either self-love, or slavish fear of God, it is not worshipping God in spirit, 2 Tim. i. 7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

(3.) The true Christian worships God with good-will. Hence in Eph. vi. 7, servants are exhorted "with good will to do service, as to the Lord, and not to men." And says the church, Is. lxiv. 5, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness." If the heart be away from the work, and it be done grudgingly, doubtless it is spiritless worship, unacceptable to God.

(4.) The true Christian worships God for his honour and glory, as his chief end. God has proposed it as such, 1 Cor. x. 31, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God:" and the Christian aims at it accordingly, as Paul did, Philip. i. 21, "For to me to live is Christ, says he, "and to die is gain." If self get highest here, it is selfish, not spiritual worship, Hos. xii. 1; Zech. vii. 6.

2. The true Christian worships God by assistance from and influence of the Holy Spirit of God. Compare Eph. vi. 18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit;" with Jude ver. 20, "But ye, beloved, praying in the Holy Ghost," &c. And this assistance is given two ways.

1*st*, The Spirit gives habitual grace to make the man capable of spiritual worship: 1 Tim. i. 5, "Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned;" John iii. 6, "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." The carnal heart which the regenerating Spirit has never changed, is not capable of this worship, 1 Cor. ii. 14.

2*dly*, He gives actual grace, influences to stir up grace: Rom. viii. 26, "For the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He blows on the soul, and makes the spices send forth their pleasant smell. It is through him they mortify the deeds of the body, Rom. viii. 13; and by him, *i. e.* by influences from him, they serve the Lord, Eph. ii. 18; for they live out of themselves, by the Spirit of Christ.

II. I shall shew that this worshipping of God in spirit is a distinguishing mark of a true Christian.

1. All true Christians capable of worshipping God (for the apostle speaks not of infants, idiots, &c.) have it. It is not the attainment of the first three only; the highest and lowest in Christ's school, the strongest and weakest of Christ's family, have it, though in different degrees. For,

1*st*, All of them are spiritual, because born of the Spirit; and every thing that brings forth, brings forth its like, John iii. 6. As soon as they are born, ere ever they be grown, they are spirit fitted for spiritual actions. And seeing every thing acts according to its nature, the new nature will make people serve the Lord "in newness of the spirit, not in the oldness of the letter," Rom. vii. 6.

2*dly*, All of them have the Spirit of God dwelling in them so that "they are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, Rom. viii. 9. Now, the Spirit is given to help our infirmities, and to help us to worship God in the right manner. And he will never leave his people altogether carnal.

3*dly*, That worship which is merely outward, and not in the spirit, is but the carcase of duties, unacceptable to God; and they that never perform more than this, are but mere hypocrites. Hence, says our Lord to the Scribes and Pharisees, Matth. xv. 7, 8, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me."

4*thly*, External worship is properly but the means of worship; all outward ordinances, as prayer, hearing, &c. do tend to the promoting of love, trust, &c.; and the enjoyment of God can never be found but in worshipping him in spirit. So that unless we will say a man may be a true Christian, and never enjoy God in any duty it is plain all Christians must worship God in the Spirit.

2. That none but true Christians have this privilege is plain from this, that none other are spiritual; they are in the flesh, and cannot please God; they are sensual, (Gr. soully, natural, rational), not having the Spirit, Jude, ver. 19. What they do, is at best but the product of their own spirits; which may carry the length of moral seriousness, but no further. None but true Christians can ever attain the spirituality of worship.

THE APPLICATION.

INFERENCE 1. Then there are many in the church that are none of God's people. This casts,

1. All those that do not worship God. There is a generation that call not upon God at all, who never bow a knee to him in secret or in their families. Such are practical atheists. Is there a

God, and will not ye worship him? Remember that God will not acknowledge you that acknowledge not him.

2. Those that halve their worship. As, (1.) Those who will worship God in public, but in their families and closets not at all. (2.) Those who perform outward duties, but never internal worship: it is the least half ye do.

3. Those whose religion is confined to their solemn approaches to God, but have nothing of it in their ordinary conversation; whereas the Christian's life is as it were one continued act of worship; he is "in the fear of the Lord all the day long," Prov. xxiii. 17.

4. Those who worship not God in spirit. And,

(1.) Those whose worship is mere bodily exercise, Matth. xv. 7, 8; who may shew a great deal of devotion in their outward carriage, but have nothing of soul-devotion with it.

(2.) Those whose worship is only the exercise of their own spirits by themselves, not by the Spirit of the Lord, and are strangers to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, John xv. 5. Without this our worship is but carnal.

Inference 2. Then all that worship God in spirit, may thence comfortably conclude, that they are real Christians, true saints. Spiritual worshippers are spiritual Christians, the true Israel of God, "whose praise is not of men, but of God;" and shall be gathered among the spirits of just men made perfect, when carnal worshippers shall be led forth with the workers of iniquity. Now, for ridding of marches here, I shall offer some marks or characters to distinguish those that worship God in spirit from others.

1. The spiritual worshipper's soul goes along with his body in the worship of God; his heart is in some measure brought up to the duty. Hence he can say, with the Psalmist, Psalm cxix. 58, "I entreated thy favour with my whole heart." His tongue and other members of the body employed in worship, are faithful interpreters of his mind: Lam. iii. 41, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands (Heb. to our hands) unto God in the heavens." 1 Tim. ii. 8, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Psal. xxi. 2. "Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of of his lips." The affections of the mind answer the actions of the body. 1 Cor. xiv. 14, My spirit prayeth, but my understanding" which I have of the thing I pray for in an unknown tongue "is unfruitful" (to others that know not that tongue). A man's spirit prayeth, (1.) when he knows what he wants and seeks; (2.) when he has affections answerable to his petitions, Rom. viii. 26.

But ah! what shall we say of that worship which is but lip-la-

bour, where the heart joins not with the body? His body prays, but his spirit does not; his ears hear, but his heart is stopped; his mouth eats and drinks bread and wine in the Lord's supper, but his soul feeds not on Christ. Nay, this is not spiritual, but carnal worship. There are three ways how the soul joins not in the worship.

1*st*, Sometimes the man's spirit leaves him in duty quite, unless it be just as far as to keep him from speaking nonsense; and oft-times it leaves him so far, that indeed he speaks he knows not what before the Lord. The body is there, but the heart is gone, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. The man is active enough about business till he comes to his knees, and then he expires as it were; the heart leaves him at the foot of the mount of God, and he never finds it till he comes down again from the mount of duties.

2*dly*. Sometimes the heart is intent on the carcase of the worship, but neglects the life and soul of it. See the picture of this case drawn, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. "Though I speak with tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." The man has burning lips, but a naughty heart, "like a potsherd covered with silver dross," Prov. xxvi. 23. A garb of devotion appears on him outwardly: there is not an irreverent look in hearing, and yet never a word received with faith and love; there is never a wrong word in the prayer, and never one right affection, or true concern about the thing. This takes especially in duties before others, where the eyes and ears of men are on them; which the false heart is more concerned to please, than the heart-searching God. And hence are men oft-times very lively to appearance in public, and yet as dead and flat in secret as ever; for then the wild-fire goes out, when men want the breath of applause to blow it up.

3*dly*, Sometimes the heart is so far from joining in the worship, that there are particulars which it enters its dissent against. "Lord, make me holy; kill this lust, let me never turn to it again," says the man. If the man truly consider what he says, the heart starts back from this petition, being glued to that lust; and he would think that he had but a sorry off-come, if God should take him at his word, Jer. xiii. ult: and the heart would say, as Peter in another case, "Thou shalt never wash my feet:" and with the Israelites, Jer. ii. 25, "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go."

But are your hearts in good earnest in your worship? Do you labour to bring your heart to duty, and to fix it on the life and soul, and not merely on the outward carcase of duty? Are your souls reconciled to the promises, which are the rule of prayers, par-

ticularly to those of universal sanctification, so that you have no petitions against which the heart dissents; your spirit goes along with your body in worship, and so ye are worshippers in spirit? To clear further this mark, I shall here speak to two questions.

QUESTION 1. "May not the heart of a hypocrite, in worshipping God, be intent upon the thing he is about, and have earnest affections to obtain it? I answer, he may. Felix's mind was not only fixed on Paul's words, Acts xxiv. 25, but on the things preached by him, otherwise he had not trembled so as he did. The stony ground hearers wanted not affection to the word; nor the foolish virgins in their prayer, Matth. xxv. 11, "Lord, Lord, open to us:" no doubt they were in earnest in it. But all this amounts to no more than moral seriousness, upon that principle, Job ii. 4, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life;" which is far different from spiritual sincerity. Principles of self-love may tie a man's heart to those things which his heart is persuaded are necessary to his safety. And so all those affections of hypocrites to spiritual things, are yet but carnal affections, proceeding on a comparative, not an absolute judgment; that is to say, the man would rather part with his sin than go to hell for it; but otherwise he would be as loathe to part with his lust as with a limb: in which case, though the man hold out his leg to the surgeon to be cut off, his heart is far from going along with the action; as the Lord afflicts his people not willingly, Lamb. iii. 33. (Heb.) not from his heart. But the gracious soul goes along with it on an absolute judgment, as the prisoner holds out his legs to one that would take off the fetters, with which the heart goes along.

QUESTION 2. May not a sincere soul, in worship, fall into those things whereby we have said the soul joins not with the body in worship? ANSWER. 1. In the general, Every godly soul doth not at all times worship God in Spirit. Hence says the spouse, Cant. iii. 1, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not." Sometimes their spirits are taken napping, and their worship would be a very sorry evidence of their state. The flesh gets above the spirit, and then they will be very dead and formal. But that is not their way, but their wandering off their way, which they have been on, and certainly will come again to. 2. More particularly, I would say, (1.) Though their hearts may be apt to wander, yet when they are any thing awake, they will struggle with them to bring them up to the duty. And though they cannot hinder (impertinent thoughts) the birds to fly about their heads, yet they will endeavour that they do not nestle in their hair, by entertaining them. (2.) So far as these prevail,

or a greater intenseness on the carcase than life of duties, so far will the spiritual worshipper be disatisfied with himself, and with the duty, and reckon it lost duty with respect to the ends of worship; which must needs humble him, and make him groan as under a hurden which he longs to be rid of. (3.) In so far as there is flesh in him, there will be likewise a dissent from the petitions of the Spirit, Gal. v. 17, and its actings in worship; but in so far as there is Spirit in him, there will also be an answer to that dissent of the flesh, and a protestation of adherence to the petition, and that according to the law of grace it may be granted, notwithstanding the dissent of the flesh, Gal. v. 17. "The Spirit [lusteth] against the flesh." All these things we have, Rom. vii. 21—24.

2. The spiritual worshipper aims at the enjoyment of God himself in duties. Hence we have the declaration of the Psalmist, Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." And again, Psal. lxiii. 1, 2, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctury." He comes to the galleries of ordinances, public, private, and secret, because the King is held there; goes through the streets and broad ways of duties to find his soul's beloved. Thus as God in Christ is the object, so he is the end of their worship. I will offer four things to clear this.

1*st*, The spiritual worshipper has a spiritual aim in worshipping of God. It is a heavenly trade he is driving by divine ordinances, a trade with another world, to be enriched with the product thereof. This was the practice of the apostle, as we learn from Phil. iii. 20, "Our conversation (says he) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." He is carried above the little carnal designs that many narrow souls have in their religion, as that of a name, Matth. vi. 2, or some other carnal interest, as those who followed Christ for the loaves, and many others who make religion lacquey it at the foot of interest.

2*dly*, The spiritual worshipper aims at something in duties above self, even the enjoyment of God. O! it is sad to think how many duties to God are performed, so as they run all as Jordan into the dead sea (of self) in the end. Most men seek themselves, their peace, their security from wrath by duties, rather than God. They seek God, not for himself, but for themselves. But when the heart is spiritualized, it is unselfed; God himself becomes man's chief end,

the centre of the soul, to which it natively tends by virtue of the new nature, which is a grace called godliness, 2 Pet. i. 6.

3dly, The spiritual worshipper aims at himself, as well as his benefits, in his worship. They come to seek him in his worship, not only as a master, who must get work, and so will give wages; but as a husband who gives himself to his spouse, who gives herself to him. It is in the duties of his worship that the soul comes to be united more and more to God in this world; and they are appointed for that end, and used for it by saints.

4thly, The spiritual worshipper aims at the being partaker of the divine nature in his worship. For as the iron is laid in the fire that it may be all fired; so the spiritual worshipper lays himself before the Lord, that he may be transformed into his image. And this is most properly the enjoyment of God; while the soul being knit to him by faith, his Spirit acts in the soul thus to change it, 2 Cor iii. 18. See how God is enjoyed in heaven, 1 John iii. 2 "We know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." And this is a most distinguishing character of a spiritual wprshipper; for seeing the carnal mind, though never so much refined, is enmity against God, and all the attributes of God are not any thing distinct from him, the heart of the most refined hypocrite can no more be reconciled to his perfections, than light to darkness. Wherefore the soul seeking to enjoy God in his communicable perfections to be holy, as he is holy, seeks the enjoyment of God himself, and is a spiritual worshipper. Thus ye see the nature of this mark. And hence two things may be fairly inferred.

(1.) That spiritual worshippers look on external duties only as means to communion with God, and therefore will not rest in the work done. They are but the way to communion with God, and therefore are valuable only as means. They that look for no more of duties, but to get them done and by hand, and value their duties while they have no enjoyment of God in them, are carnal worshippers, that take up with the grave-clothes, while the Lord is not there. Have over by this sermon, prayer, &c. will the saint say; for he is not as he who is to sail for pleasure, and therefore seeks not to go over but as a passenger.

(2. That spiritual worshippers will not be satisfied with duties unless they enjoy God in them; as was the case with the spouse, Cant. iii. 2, 3, 4, "I will arise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city, found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my

soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." What avail the galleries, while the King is not seen walking in them? And if this be so, few worship God in spirit, seeing so many can tarry without grief of heart at Jerusalem, come to sermons, go to prayers, &c and never see the King's face.

3. Spiritual worshippers act in their worship from a higher principle than their own spirits, even the Spirit of the Lord. Spiritual worship is a supernatural action, which carnal men are incapable of; and therefore there must be a supernatural principle of it. The most refined hypocrite doth but exercise a gift in worshipping the Lord, and is destitute of the sanctifying Spirit's influences; their own spirits at best do but exert their natural powers in the best duties by them performed. Jude ver. 19, carnal men are called sensual, (Gr.) soul-men, or men of soul, whose own souls are their highest principles; and so it is explained in the next clause, they have not the Spirit, which is necessary to spiritualize a soul. And so, ver. 20, in opposition to these they are bid pray in the Holy Ghost. And the performing of spiritual worship thus, says,

1*st*, The spiritual worshipper looks not and lippens not to his stock within him for the performance of duties, but comes to duty under a sense of wants and weakness. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 5, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." He dare not adventure on the Lord's work in his own strength; whereas the conceity hypocrite lippens to and works the duty out of the stock within him; for he is never poor in spirit, Matth. v. 3.

2*dly*, He looks to the Lord for the influences of his Spirit, crying and spreading out his sails for a gale from above; as did the spouse, Cant. iv. ult., "Awake O north-wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." He stretcheth out the withered hand to Christ. "Here is the word, Lord, send the Spirit to "make it effectual," &c. And this is the exercise of faith absolutely necessary to spiritual worship; for its work is to fetch the fire of the Spirit from Christ our altar, to set to the incense we offer. It is that which travels for ability for duty betwixt Christ's fulness and the creature's emptiness, setting down the blind and lame at Christ's door.

The worshipping of God thus by the Spirit is so necessary, that no worship is pleasing to God but what is thus performed. For Christ will not put in his censer of intercession, but what is the product of his own Spirit. Hence says the Apostle, Eph. ii. 18, "Through Christ we have both an access by one spirit unto the Father." And

it is the inwrought prayer (as that word, James v. 16, may be read; or a prayer with such vhemency, as one possessed by a spirit doth express himself) that availeth. And a groan thus delivered, is better than a prayer from our own spirits, merely adorned with all the flowers of oratory.

Here a grave question comes to be handled, viz. How we may distinguish betwixt exercising a gift in duty, and acting from the influences of the Spirit? Enlargement will not do it; for nature has its own enlargements, and there may be a straitening in a gift and enlargement in it too, as well as in grace, Zech. xi. ult. Thus God both enlarged and straitened Saul in his gift of wisdom, conduct, and courage. Delight in the duty will not do it either, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. Other folk's gifts may greatly delight us in the exercise of them; and an easy and neat exercise of a man's own gift, may be very pleasant melody in the man's own carnal ears. But,

1. All the influences of the Spirit are humbling; and always the more of them, the more humble and vile they make the man in his own eyes. This may be seen in the angels, who though they are without sin, yet being under the most abundant influences of the Spirit, do cast vile man a copy of humility, Isa. vi. 2, 3, "Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." Behold it in the man Christ, to whom the Spirit was given without measure, who was most exemplary in humility, Matth. xi. 29, "Learn of me," says he, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." And it may be observed of all the saints of God, that the more of the influence of the Spirit they had, they were always the more humble; as we may see from the instances of Abraham, Job, and Isaiah. Paul, after he was rapt up to the third heavens, was in his own eyes nothing, 2 Cor. xii. 11. And the reason is plain, for the influences of the Spirit do always carry up the soul to whence they came; as the waters of the deluge, the more they increased, they carried the ark still nearer heaven: and the nearer we come to the light of God's countenance, our wants, weakness, and nothingness, must still appear the more.

On the other hand, the exercise of a gift merely, leaves always the soul in the same unhumbled state it found it. For it is impossible that nature should work the soul into a gracious disposition; and nature's force is too weak to beat down the natural pride of the heart. Nay, nature will build up nature; and the better the gift is exercised, it will swell the heart the more: hence publicans and

harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before Pharisees: Isa. lviii. 3, "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" And thus many swell with the little gift they get, till they burst all bonds.

2. The Spirit's influences in duty fill the soul with a reverential fear of God in duty, Heb. xii. 28. which is excellent ballast to a light and frothy heart; and always the more of it, the more reverence of God, Gen. xxviii. 17. The reason is, because the Spirit is the Spirit of adoption, Gal. iv. 6; and so will work a child-like disposition in the soul towards God, as towards a father, and a heavenly father: so that the greatest familiarity with God will not work out, but work forward this reverence, Psalm xlv. 9, "Upon thy right hand did stand," in token of reverence, "the queen in gold of Ophir."

But the mere exercise of a gift in duty can never impress this holy reverence of God on the soul; witness that lightness and frothiness of heart which men, that way, bring with them from duty, Prov. vii. 14, 15. For gifts exercised without the Spirit, raise a cloud in the soul; are light in the inside, dark in the outside; whereby the more they see of themselves, the less they see of God; and so their deluded spirits seem the more to be near an equal level with him. To clear this further, I shall propose and resolve some questions: As,

Question 1. May not a hypocrite have in duty a great fear of God on his spirit? Answer. A slavish fear of God as almighty and a judge, which casteth out love, a man may have, as Felix had in hearing Paul: but this filial reverential fear of God intermixed with love he cannot have, seeing he has not the Spirit of adoption; whose work it is to knit the saint's hearts to God as a Friend and Father, and to draw them after him with such child-like affections, as makes them delight in his commands and providences. Hence says the apostle, 2 Tim. i. 7, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;" (Gr.) a healing of mind, viz. from that slavish fear.

Question 2. But can saints have no such slavish fear of God? Answer. As all the graces of the Spirit are imperfect and mixed in the saints, so is their fear of God not without a mixture of that slavishness. Hence saith Jesus unto his disciples, Matth. viii. 26, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith? It is the same word as 2 Tim. i. 7. It is true, God never again gives them the spirit of bondage; but they may, through unbelief, take up a spirit of bondage again. But seeing they can never again lose the Spirit of adoption, neither

can they lose that grace of filial reverential fear altogether: so that there is still as much difference betwixt them and hypocrites, as betwixt the malefactor fearing the judge, and a son's fearing his father; who appears enraged against him, and about to put him out of his house; which yet will not kill natural affection.

QUESTION 3. But how can the saints fear God as a Father, when they are not assured they are his children? ANSWER. The Spirit's operations depend not on our sense and knowledge of them. This was the wise observation of Solomon, Eccl. xi. 5, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." But as the Spirit sanctifies the saints whether they know it or not, so he works that filial fear of God in them, whether they know it or not. God's children are like those infants, who though they know not their father, yet by their features do father themselves.

3. The influences of the Spirit are always sanctifying, as well as assisting to duty: Zech xii. 10, "I will pour," saith the Lord, "upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." They are, as the Baptist was, a burning and shining light. When the Spirit was poured out, according to that prophecy, Joel ii. 28; Acts ii. 3, there appeared cloven tongues, as of fire. Behold the nature of the Spirit's influences. (1.) They give a man a new tongue to speak of and to God. It is a dumb devil, and not the Spirit, that makes men tongue-tied in prayers to and praises of God. (2.) They are sanctifying, burning up corruption in their heart and life, as tongues of fire. For as when at Babel languages were confounded, and so the holy tongue in which people were taught remained but with a few, then the world lost the knowledge of God, and grew most corrupt in their lives; so when God was about to remedy this with the gift of tongues, these appeared as of fire, because of the dross of the world that was to be burnt up therewith. Thus the Spirit's influences in duty still tend to make the man more holy in heart and life, set him more at odds with sin, and steel his spirit with new vigour to pursue holiness. Hence we have that speech of the psalmist, Psal. vi. 8, 9, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplications; the Lord will receive my prayer."

But the exercise of a gift leaves the man still as unholy as before, as much in love with lusts as before; as we learn from the case of those of whom Christ says, Matth. vii. 22, 23, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy

name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Truth is prisoner in their heads.

And so much for the marks of spiritual worshippers. I come now to

INFERENCE 3. Learn from this not to think of gifts for duty above what is meet. The matter of gifts for duty is abused by two sorts of persons, the proud hypocrite, and the weak Christian. From this doctrine I have a word to both.

1. To the proud hypocrite. And,

1*st*. Are those, and only those, God's people, true saints, real Christians, who worship God in the spirit? then ye pitifully miss the mark, when ye are more careful to get the gift than the grace of duty; more concerned to order your tongues than your hearts in prayer. Gifts come from God indeed; but there is less of God in them than grace, and that makes them more desirable than grace to a corrupt heart.

2*dly*, Be not proud of the gifts for duty that ye have. If ye have a gift of prayer, judgment, or memory, or utterance, &c., think not much of it. Truly we have no such reason; and if we had no more of the hellish gift of discerning our own attainments and excellencies, than of other gifts from the Lord, we would not he so conceity. It is light from an ill airth that gives a man such a view of his gifts as to be puffed up with them, 1 Tim. iii. 6. It is such a light as appears before a man's eyes when he has got such a stroke on the head as blinds him. But consider,

(1.) They are God's gifts indeed; but they are but left hand ones, a crown that he can set on your head with one hand, and within a little take from you with the other, as he did Saul's. They are of that sort that are common to Christ's sheep and the devil's goats. Grace is of another nature, a right hand gift, with which God gives his heart, and is without repentance.

(2.) They can help you to the outside of duty; but, alas! they can reach no farther; and what for serves the carcase of duty? Ye may worship God with a gift; but that is not worshipping in spirit, and so cannot set you among the children. The weak Christian that would think shame to speak before you now, shall be brought in, when the door of heaven shall be cast in your face for ever, if ye have no more.

(3.) Your gifts may be useful to others; but, alas! they are useless to you as to any spiritual profit. Hence says the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 3, "Though I speak with the tongues of men, and

of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. All is yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," O believers; even hypocrites' gifts are yours; they are given them, not for their own sake, but the sake of others. The carpenters that built the ark, the profit of their gift came to Noah, not to them, for they perished in the deluge. So was the case with the raven that fed Elijah. Your gifts may be means to save others, while ye perish yourselves.

(4.) You may go to hell for all your gifts, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2; Matth. vii. 22, 23, forecited. Light without heat serves only to show the way to the place where there is heat without light, *i. e.* to outer darkness, where the fire is never quenched. Gifts without grace are like a ship without balast, that will easily perish. And when such a man is sinking into hell, his gifts will be like a bag of gold on a drowning man, precious in itself, but will only help to sink him the deeper. The devil has greater gifts than the best gifted in the world; and some have thought it was his pride of his endowments that ruined him; however, it is certain he is ruined notwithstanding his gifts.

2. Some weak Christians are ready to be discouraged because they want those gifts for duty that they see others have, and from thence may be ready to conclude they have neither the gift nor grace of duty. To such I say,

1*st*, Your conclusion is rash; grace may be where there is but a very small measure of gifts: 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty: and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." It was the plain man Jacob (Gen. xxv. 27.) who was the prevailer with God; and the Spirit helps our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered," not with flourishes of rhetoric.

2*dly*, It is not the gift of duty, but the grace of it, that is acceptable with God. Grace with little gifts will go far, even to the throne

of God: Rom. vii. 26, 27, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." As a father loves the lisping speeches of his child better than the empty well-worded compliments of another, so doth the Lord the duties of his own people. The glory of the second house was to be greater than the first; there was more gold in the first, but more grace, even Christ in the second. So if Christ be in thy soul, there will be much grace, however little of gifts. If a beggar come to you, ye do not wait till he show his parts, but till he show his needs; and if he show you his sores, though he speak very ill, it is enough, he is a needy beggar, he must be served.

3dly, Great gifts had need of a great measure of grace to be ballast to them. And it is God's goodness to some, that they have no great gifts, they have so little grace to guide them with. God does with them as a wiser father with his son that has but a little stock; he sets him down in a little farm, lest too much in hand should master him. It may be observed, that the men, the saints of greatest parts, have usually got the sharpest exercises to be ballast to their gifts, lest their heads turning over heavy for their hearts, should truss them up, 2 Cor. xii. 7. And ye see how it did in Solomon's case, the wisest of men; his gifts mastered his grace, and made him a fool to a degree. And how it broke his bones, see in his penitentials, Eccl. *per totum*. Take for instance Heman, a man of vast parts, 1 Kings iv. 31, compare his Psalm. lxxxviii. Job as an oracle for wit among his neighbours, Job xxix. 8, 9, 10—21—25. Paul the only scholar among the apostles, see Acts ix. and 2 Cor. xii. Let the Christian be thankful for what he has.

4thly, Thou hast the thing that is better, that is, grace; a little gold is better than a lump of lead. Dost thou come with thy heart to God in duty? aimest thou at the enjoyment of himself in duty? goest thou out of thyself to the Lord for ability for duty? then though thy gifts are very small, thou worshippest in spirit. Good meat never tastes the worse that it is served up in a wooden dish; it is as good as in a golden platter, though the last makes the greatest dash in the eyes of spectators. If thy affections to God in duty be fervent, though your words be not very fine, they will never be cast in heaven for this.

I discharge them that are possessed with the dumb devil, to meddle with this I have been saying. They will not bow a knee to

God, because, forsooth, they cannot pray. They will not open a mouth for God, because they have not the gift that others have; they will not speak of spiritual things, and care as little to hear them spoken of. They are grossly ignorant of the principles of religion; but they are at as little pains to get knowledge, and will not. But now, say they, we have not the gift, but God knows our hearts. But I tell you that are such, ye have neither the gift nor the grace of duty. It is true, God's children may be stammerers in speaking to or of him, but none of them are dumb like you. Their want of gifts is not such as to make them neglect the very matter of external duty as ye do. And what they have not, they desire to have, and endeavour to win at, that they may glorify God with it.

INFERENCE 4. Learn from this not to think much of the bare performance of duties. We have need to have our thoughts of our duties corrected. And this doctrine affords,

1. A confounding lesson to formal hypocrites anent their duties; and that is, that all the duties they have been working at all their days, are naught in the sight of God, because they were never spiritual worshippers. Perhaps ye will be counting ye have served God so many years; ye pray twice, thrice, or oftener in a day, heard so many sermons, received so many communions, &c. and be ready to value yourselves on this. But dreadfully will the count come down when God looks on it; it will turn to nothing at all in point of duty. Nay, ye will find them all set down in another count, the count of your works of iniquity, where they will make so many black items. O how will the man's heart fail him to hear what justice has to lay to his charge! *Imprimis*, unbelief, not believing in the Son of God; *item*, God's name taken in vain in so many pretended prayers; *item*, so many sermons heard without faith, love, and practice; *item*, so often bread and wine eaten at God's table, while there was no feeding on a crucified Christ, &c. Matth. vii. 22, 23, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Whence observe, the wonderful works they did for Christ, which themselves and others wondered at, are in Christ's account works of iniquity. We make a tripartite division of people in the visible church. (1.) Some that serve God sincerely. (2.) Some that serve him hypocritically. (3.) Some that serve him not at all. God makes but two sorts, casting the two last into one, Mal. iii. 18, "Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and

him that serveth him not. Compare ver. 17, "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Whence learn (1.) The righteous only serve God; as for others, whatever be the difference among them, they agree in that, both profane folk and hypocrites, that they serve not God. (2.) A man who is not a child of God, can perform no service to God in his account; slaves' service is no service, Hos. vii. 14. The Lord's people are the children that serve him as a Father.

2. This doctrine affords a humbling lesson to the godly anent their duties. Many of your duties are naught in the sight of God. If only spiritual worshippers be real saints, ye act not as saints in any duties but those that are done in the spirit. And truly if this be so, it will do two things.

1*st*, It will bring your great number of duties down to very few, so that all ye have done for God may be soon told. Since ye were acquainted with Christ, ye durst never perhaps rise up nor lie down without praying; but when these things come before the Lord, it will be found there has been found many a day and week ye have prayed none at all; many a sabbath in the kirk when ye have not heard the sermon; many a sweet portion of Scripture ye never read to this day, though ye have gone over and over it again.

2*dly*, It will make many a long duty of yours very short. Let that be taken off the duty that was not done in the spirit, and off it must go, many a long prayer and sermon will be brought to a very few sentences that ye have heard or prayed; and many a sentence broken off in the midst where the heart left the man. I trow the skin and the dung of your sacrifices that must be burnt without the camp, will be more bulk than all the flesh of them that has come on God's altar.

3. It affords a necessary lesson to both, namely, Ye need Christ, ye cannot be without him. O how does the profane world need Christ! But, O Sirs, ye need him as really when ye are going to your prayers, as the man that is going in the devil's fetters to his cups and his drunken companions needs him; ye need him as really when ye are going to the sermon on the Lord's day, as he who profanely casts contempt on God's ordinance, by loitering at home on the Lord's day. Ye need him when ye are mourning over your sins, as well as others when they are revelling, and going the broad gate with tabret and pipe.

1*st*, Ye need himself. Sinners, ye need himself, to be united to him, to be one spirit with him. Hence says he, John xv. 6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered;

and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." If he would give you never so many gifts, if ye get not himself ye are nothing, "ye can do nothing," ver. 5. There is nothing can make up his room. An eternal barrenness will lie on your souls; the heavens will be as brass above you, and the earth as iron beneath you, if ye get not himself. And the axe of God's judgments will hew you down with your wild grapes, as well as others that have no shew of fruit, if ye get not himself. If ye grow on your own root, though ye should water it every day with your tears, yea tears of your blood, if ye get not Christ, your root shall be as rottenness, and your blossom shall go up as dust. Root and fruit shall be destroyed for ever from the presence of the Lord.

Saints, ye need himself, to be more and more closely united to him, to be growing up into him, Eph. iv. 15. According to your faith so will it be unto you, not only in point of privilege, but in point of duty, in point of holiness. Ye have come to Christ, but ye must be always coming to him, 1 Pet. ii. 4. Mind to whom that was said, John xv. 4, 5, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." Ye need him for "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. And it is he that God has made "our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Ye need him for all.

2dly, Ye need his blood. Sinners, ye need it; ye need it to make your persons accepted, to consecrate you for servants to the Lord, Heb. ix. 19. to be priests unto God: and without the sprinkling of that blood on you, God will no more regard your services, than a sacrifice by one who was never consecrated a priest; for all spiritual worshippers are made priests, 1 Pet. ii. 9. Ye need it to take away the guilt of your dead works of duties, which, till it be removed from your conscience, utterly unfits you to serve the living God; as they which were defiled with the touch of a dead body might not come into the tabernacle; to which the apostle alludes, Heb. ix. 14.

Saints, ye need his blood. It is true, ye are washed in that blood already, but new defilements require new washings, John xiii. 10. There is an allusion there to the priests under the law, who were to bathe their whole bodies in the morning, but notwithstanding at every new service through the day they were to wash their hands and feet ere they approached the altar. Now, ye are washed in

respect of your state, that continues; but ye must still be washing for the iniquities of your heels, that at every turn are compassing you about. Therefore the sea of glass stands always betwixt the saints and the throne, Rev. iv. 6.

3*dly*, Ye need his Spirit. Sinners, ye need him; there is no worshipping in spirit without the Spirit. They are but lifeless carcases of duty that are performed without the Spirit. That which died of itself was utterly unfit for a sacrifice; and such are your best performances without the Spirit. Now, it is from him the Spirit comes, Rev. iii. 1.

Saints also need the Spirit; for it is not enough to spiritual worship that the Spirit dwells in us, but that the Spirit influence us to and in duty. The Spirit must help our infirmities, stirring up the fire within us, putting grace in exercise, otherwise our performance will be but mere bodily exercise.

INFERENCE 5. *Lastly*, To shut up this, be exhorted and warned to take heed how ye worship God; in what manner ye perform every duty; labouring to be spiritual in all. And there are two things ye would in this mainly endeavour to study.

1. To get the heart brought up to every duty. Pray, confess, thank, petition, hear, &c., from the heart: Col. iii. 23, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily;" (Gr.) "work it from your soul." Gold is fetched out of the bowels of the earth, and pearls out of the bottom of the sea; and spiritual worship comes from the inner man, "the hidden man of the heart;" while external duties, like common stones, are found lying every where on the surface of the earth. We should be fervent, seething hot, as the word imports, while serving the Lord, Rom. xii. 11.

2. To go out of yourselves for ability to duty. This was Joshua's intent when he told the people that had engaged to duty, Josh. xxiv. 19, "Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God: he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins." When we go to duties we should do as Elijah did, lay the sacrifice on the altar, and then look to the Lord for fire from heaven to consume it, 1 Kings xviii. 33, 37, 38. The Spirit of the Lord is that fire from heaven which burns our sacrifices of duties, and makes the smoke of them ascend towards heaven for a sweet-smelling savour. And as no sacrifice was accepted but what was burnt by that fire from heaven, hence Psalm xx. 3, "Accept [Heb. Reduce to ashes] thy burnt sacrifice;" so no duty is accepted but what is by the influence of the Spirit. When, then, we go to duty, sit down on your knees, &c., here is the sacrifice; but where is the fire? If it be struck out of our own spirits merely, it will make an offensive

smoke; but an acceptable flame, if from heaven we fetch it by the greedy looks of faith. Consider,

1*st*, God is a Spirit, and therefore must be worshipped in spirit, John iv. 24. How unsuitable is mere bodily exercise in religion to the nature of God! Were we to serve dead idols, a dead formal worship might serve. But the living God must have lively service, or it cannot be accepted: Rev. iii. 19, "Be zealous therefore and repent."

2*dly*, God takes special notice how duties are done. Take heed how ye hear, and so how ye pray, &c. God will have his service well done, as well as done, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9: yea, he reckons it the main thing in duty; so necessary, that the want of it alters the very nature of duty, and turns it to sin, Hos. vii. 14; 1 Cor. xi. 20.

2*dly*, Your duties are the touchstone of your faith, of your interest in Christ, &c.; ye have much need to take heed to them. Spiritual worship is the mark of a child of God; so that by your worship ye will prove either that ye are real saints, or that ye are but hypocrites.

And so much for the first character of a saint, namely, that he is one that worships God in the spirit.

II. We come now to the *second* character of a real saint he is one that "rejoiceth in Christ Jesus." In the *first* character a saint is represented as a great worker in good works and service to God, going with his heart into the heart, marrow, and soul of duties; and therein going beyond hypocrites, that never go farther in than the outward court with their duties, their duties being like themselves, "having not the Spirit;" while the sincere person works in duties, as if he minded to win heaven by them. It would then be expected that those duties should be the joy, confidence, comfort, and life of his soul. Sure, they that have much less reason, make that use of their duties; but the saints do not so. Though they do more, they trust less in what they do than others. Nay they overlook them as to any confidence in them before the Lord; and though they "worship in spirit," they "rejoice in Christ Jesus." Though they bring their hearts to duty, yet that is not the thing that keeps up their hearts before the Lord, but Christ. In him they rejoice, or, as the original hath it, "they glory:" which is more than simply to rejoice. It imports a glorying or boasting with a strutting out of the neck, and casting up of the head in a boasting way, Psal. xliv. 8. It is the soul's acquiescing with joy in Christ as its only hope against all that might harm it, not being ashamed to profess it.

DOCTRINE. That is the real Christian, who though he worship God in spirit, yet rejoiceth in Christ Jesus.

In handling this doctrine, I shall shew what it is to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in what sense the true Christian rejoices in him. And ye would notice this as a mark of a true saint.

But there is an objection meets us here in the threshold, that must be removed. It is this: If Joy in Christ be a mark of a gracious state, what shall come of poor doubting trembling Christians, who go mourning without the sun, that stand most in need of marks that they may rejoice in Christ; while others that can rejoice in Christ, do already see their interest? ANSWER. The mark in the text is given by the infallible Spirit, and therefore doubtless is consistent with what he elsewhere teacheth in his word, and must be so understood as not to exclude the mournful worshipper in spirit. But to clear the point, I offer these two things.

1. There is a radical or habitual joy in Christ; which is a disposition of soul inclining and bending the soul towards Christ as the spring and object of its joy before the Lord: for as when God made Adam, Eccl. vii. 29, with a frame of soul inclining to the will of God, this disposition did denominate him righteous before he had done one righteous act; so when in the new creation, the Lord puts this disposition in the soul, it may denominate him a rejoicer in Christ, even before he actually rejoice in him. Then there is an actual joy or rejoicing in Christ, wherein the soul acting from that disposition solaceth itself, in the Lord in greater or lesser measure. Upon this I say,

1*st*, Every believer, even in his darkest hours, has this radical and habitual joy in Christ: Psalm xcvii. 11, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." As there is a worm of sorrow at the root of every gourd under which the wicked doth rejoice, Prov. xiv. 13; so there is a seed of joy even in the saints' mournings, that will get above the clods in due time. There are always some pieces of heaven in their hottest hells. There are everlasting arms underneath, which for the time are only keeping the soul from sinking: but we may say of them, as Naomi of Boaz, when he had given Ruth six measures of Barley to help them to live a while, "The man," says she, Ruth iii. ult." "will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day," till you be mistress of all he has. So these will not rest till they have lifted up the soul to a fulness of joy in the Lord.

2*dly*, Though a believer does not always rejoice actually before the Lord, more than he does always act faith, which sometimes is not

in exercise even in the best; yet when he does rejoice before the Lord he rejoices in Christ: Gal. vi. 14, "God forbid," says the Apostle "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." If the believer's feast day come but seldom about, yet when it comes, he keeps it in the white raiment of Christ's righteousness, the only garment fit for a day of joy. And he will not lay off his blacks or mournings till Christ send him other garments, Isa. lxi 1—3; Lam. iii. 39.

2. There is actual joy; which is twofold. (1.) There is a sensible joy, Luke i. 47, "My spirit," says Mary, "hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; leapt for joy," as the word signifies. And this God's people sometimes get in Christ so as their very souls are made to leap within them, while the wonder at his love and rejoice, and rejoice and wonder. And so much are we addicted to sense while in this body, that we will scarcely allow any thing but this to be called joy. But that is a mistake: for, (2.) There is a rational joy; which is the satisfaction the reasonable soul has in that which it loves and desires. We see this in the man Christ, who being a man of sorrows, had little of that sensible joy while in the world. It is remarked of him that he had one hour, or part of an hour of it, Luke x. 21, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit;" clearly teaching it was not his ordinary. Notwithstanding Christ had an abiding joy, John xv. 11, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full," to wit a solid satisfaction in the welfare of his disciples. The original words in these places clear this difference; the former being the same with that, Luke i. 47, the other importing nothing of exultation, but a joy in things prospering with a person.

Now, although the believer may but seldom have this sensible joy in Christ; and I know not but the spirit of heaviness may so sit down on some, that they may never taste of this sensible joy till they be in heaven, Heb. ii. 15; yet every believer habitually and ordinarily, as they are in the exercise, of other graces have this rational joy in Christ: for if the kingdom of God be righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17, wherever it comes, these must be there too. And this I take to be the joy aimed at in the text, as appears by its being opposed to hypocrites' confidence in the flesh; which speaks forth rather a rational complacency they have in the flesh, than any sensible joy.

The soul's union with Christ is often held forth in the Scripture under the notion of a marriage; and we read of a twofold joy in this. (1.) The joy wherewith the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, Is. lxii. 5. (2.) The joy wherewith a husband, in the continu-

ance of his married state, rejoiceth over his wife, Prov. v. 18. The former is an emblem of that sensible joy which believers sometimes have in Christ, and particularly at the time of their first receiving Christ, while they are yet but young converts, and are fed with lumps of sense, Hos. ii. 14. An instance of it we have in the eunuch, whom it is said, that "he went on his way rejoicing," Acts viii. 39. But although that sensible joy do not last, more than the fondness of a new married couple; yet there is an habitual rational joy, which remains, as other graces, with the people of God, whereof the latter is a good resemblance. For as they that have made a good choice, though they may remit of their fondness, yet continue to have a solid rational joy in one another, which though it be not so violent as the other, yet is more strong and fixed: so it is here. This is that which is here given as a mark of a true saint.

And in regard hypocrites may have a great sensible joy, Matth. xiii. 20, whatever sensible joy any pretend to must be examined by this, for this is the root on which all true sensible joy doth grow; and these joyful flashes of hypocrites will be found to spring from another root.

Now, the nature of this rejoicing in Christ lies in these four things.

1. A holy complacency in Christ.
2. A rolling of the soul over on Christ for all.
3. A rest of the heart in him as a fit match for the soul.
4. A confession of him unto salvation.

First, There is in this rejoicing in Christ, a holy complacency in him. The believer has got a view and trial of Christ, and he is well pleased with him. There is a mutual joy of the parties in the spiritual marriage. Where the soul is "Beulah, married to the Lord," it is also "Hephzi-bah, the Lord has a complacency in it," Is. lxii. 4. And so have they in him, Mal. iii. 1, "The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple: even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in." All the Jews professed this as God's people, and the godly among them really had it. Though they are eagle-eyed ones in spiritual things, in comparison of the blind world; yet they spy no fault in the mystery of Christ, but are well pleased with, and acquiesce in the grand device of salvation through Christ crucified. The Father made choice of him, carved out every piece of his work to him, in the matter of the redemption of sinners; and he is well pleased with his choice, Is. xlii. 1; Matth. iii. 17; 2 Chron. vii. 16: and it is unanimously approved in every point by the multitude of them who are "called, and faithful, and chosen;" who all with one voice cry, "Grace, grace to it;" grace,

grace to the choice; grace, grace to the contrivance, and every part of it. Sirs, since men lost the way to happiness, but not the desire of it, they have chosen new gods and guides, some one, some another; and "every man will walk in the name of his god." God the Father has made a choice for them of a Captain of salvation; the gospel is the pleading of the excellency of this choice, and puts the trying vote to the world, Approve, or, Not? The plurality has always voted, Not approve; but believers have with their souls approved the choice, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. And if ye be amongst the approvers, take his own word for it, ye are his, Matth. xi. 6, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Now, we cannot rejoice in nor be well pleased with any thing unless we see a suitableness in it to us. When a man has made his choice, if afterwards he find it unsuitable to him, this kills his joy in it: he sees he was mistaken; for when he made the choice, it was upon its supposed suitableness. Accordingly the believer rejoicing in Christ, surely beholds his absolute suitableness unto that for which he has made choice of him. And there is a threefold suitableness of Christ here to be noticed.

First, There is a suitableness of Christ, and the mystery of Christ, to the divine perfections or attributes concerned in the salvation of sinners, that is sweetly discerned by every believer, more or less clearly, and acquiesced in heartily. Hence says the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, "We preach Christ crucified—unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." There is no man that knows what God is, and what salvation is, that has got that matter of eternal salvation laid close home to his heart, but will know well on what he will venture his soul before such a holy God. They will see that the holiness, justice, &c. of God are such fixed rocks, as they will never expect they shall be removed for them; and therefore will absolutely despare of salvation in any way inconsistent with the honour and perfections of God. Hence then it plainly follows, that the soul which indeed rejoiceth in Christ, hath seen this suitableness of Christ to the divine perfections. Blessed are ye then, O believers; for ye see and acquiesce in this way of salvation, as suitable in that respect. And that this character may have the more weight with all the saints, and the naughtiness of others may be discovered, consider,

1. As there is a special illumination that believers get, and to which the most refined hypocrite is a stranger, as appears from John iv. 10; Psalm ix. 10. Christ's differencing the sincere and hypocrite as wise and foolish; so there is an illumination in the knowledge of the mystery of Christ its suitableness to the divine perfec-

tions, that is peculiar to his saints, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24; 2 Cor. iv. 6. And therefore the whole of the work of grace comes under the name of the revealing of Christ in a soul, Gal. i. 16. And what is the ruin of many that get convictions and reform, but the want of this saving discovery of Christ? So that all their religion ends in a legal Christless turn given to their lives.

2. How few are there who ever dig so deep in the sin of their hearts and lives, as once to put it to the question, whether their salvation be consistent with the honour of God, or not? Unto some men God, Christ, and sin, are veiled all their days; they never get a true view of any of them; and so whatever they do in religion, is just a leap at random, even as it falls, which is the import of that word, "walking contrary unto the Lord," Lev. xxvi. 23: and their believing (to call it so) is but a venturing of their souls on they know not what. And as for many others that have had some exercise about their soul's state on their spirits, they were never brought so low, but they thought ever if they could mourn for sin enough, reform, and believe in Christ, without any eye to his atoning blood, shed to retrieve the honour of God impaired by sin, all would be well. They were never so low as to see salvation so far above them as the honour of God has set it, never to be brought down but upon a just satisfaction to the honour of God for what they have done against it; and that a satisfaction utterly beyond the reach of their sufferings, reforming, repenting, believing, &c. To which were they brought, they would rejoice in Christ Jesus as suited to that work, the repairing the honour of the divine perfections, which stand betwixt salvation and them, 1 John i. 7, "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." But how can they rejoice in a salve for a sore under which they never smarted? Rom. v. 11.

3. Consider, all men as they are sons of the first Adam, are sons of pride, who see no glory but in the way of the first covenant; which is, that God should have his honour from them whom he saves. And because man, by the breaking of that covenant, lost his eyes, which are never under it restored, therefore they have but low thoughts of the honour of God. And hence we find Adam staying in Paradise, like a shameless adulteress in the house of her husband, till God drove him out, Gen. iii. 24. with such a sonnet as that, Jer. xi. 15, "What hath my beloved to do in mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many?" And while they have such low thoughts of it, it is no wonder they think little may serve to repair it. And the pride of the heart being unsubdued, they can see as little glory in Christ crucified repairing it, as a proud bankrupt would see in his being declared unable to pay his

debt, and one paying it for him, while he thinks he might have paid it himself, or it was not so much but might have been forgiven.

Secondly, There is a suitableness of Christ to the case of the soul, which the believer sees, and so is well pleased with, and acquiesceth in Christ as thus suited to his case. Unless the believer saw this, he could never rejoice in him. If ye would lodge a starving man in a palace, clothe him in the most costly attire, and fill his pockets with gold, behold he is at the point of death for lack of meat, and what good can these do to him, how can he rejoice in these, they are not meat, and so not suitable to his case? Now, the child of God has seen his case, and Christ's suitableness to it every way, and so approves of and acquiesceth in him as such, 1 Cor. i. 30, 31, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Every soul feels a want of something; and since Adam broke, and turned himself and all his posterity beggars, they are going up and down among the creatures seeking supply for their wants, and salve for their sores. Now, whatever they can purchase among them, though it promises fair afar off, yet when they come near and apply it, still they find it unsuitable; it will not do: "The bed is shorter" than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower, than that he can wrap himself in it." And this makes the heart secretely sigh, while it is attacked with a new dissatisfaction on every new disappointment; though they are so besotted, as that when they are "wearied in the greatness of their way; yet say they not, There is no hope," Is. lvii. 10. but go out again to beg at those doors where they have got a thousand naysays before. Now, while the elect soul is thus wandering among the rest, the Lord opens its eyes, as he did Hagar's to see the well, Gen. xxi. and Christ is discovered to the soul: and the surprised soul cries, John i. 45, "I have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write." Now, says the soul, this is my rest, and here I will stay. Hence is that parable, Matth. xiii. 45, 46, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

An excellent emblem of this ye have in that, Mark v. 25—24. concerning the woman which had an issue of blood twelve years. Where notice, (1.) She never tries Christ till she had tried others one after another, and found all physicians of no value. (2.) When she hears of Christ, she believes, and by faith concludes, there was a physician now suited to her case. (3.) There was a great multi-

tude about Christ that stood as much in need of him as she: but she saw his suitableness to her case, while they saw not how suitable he was to theirs; therefore she only gets the touch of faith. (4.) She thrusts forward, leaves all her other physicians, and takes him for, and instead of all, as fully and only suited to her case.

Now, among all those things in which the saints see Christ's suitableness, I shall only instance in these two.

1. They see a glorious suitablenes to their case in the person of Christ, as he is God-man, Is. ix. 6: that the Mediator as such a person is a contrivance to them of infinite wisdom, answering at once the honour of God, and the sinner's necessities; in which the child of God heartily acquiesceth. The man sees himself by nature in a sad case, which the whole creation cannnot help. There is a breach betwixt God and the sinner; what man, what angel, can be daysman, able to lay hands upon both? Why, here is one so high that he is "the Father's fellow" Zech. xiii. 7; yet so low as that he is "bone of our bones, and flesh of our flesh." He is nearly related to both. O suitable person! The sinner is separate from God, that is hell begun on earth; how shall the sinner be reunited to God? Will the sinner attempt immediately to unite with God? God's justice and holiness staves him off; they will not, cannot cleave together, as iron is not mixed with clay. Can angels unite them? Nay, they needed another themselves to be a bond of continuance, though not of beginning or making their own union with God. But behold in the person of Christ how it may be done. Man's nature is united already to the divine nature in the person of Christ. Behold our new relation to God, which the angels themselves cannot boast of. Here is an union for a foundation of the mystical union which the soul is seeking. Here is a suitable meeting-place betwixt God and sinners, where they may unite again with the safety of the divine honour; "The fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily; God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and in the flesh of Christ, the sinner may meet God with safety of his life: and so both unite in him. The sinner has fallen, like Lucifer, as a star from heaven; how can he get up again? behold Christ as the ladder reaching betwixt heaven and earth, set as low as the sinner could wish in his human nature, and reaching as high as he can desire in his divine nature. O glorious person suited to the sinner's case!

2. The saints see a glorious suitableness to their case in the offices of Christ, and such a suitableness as makes them acquiesce in him.

1*st*, He is a Prophet, the interpreter of the Father's mind, who

was in the Father's bosom from eternity, and is privy to all his counsels; and so sent of the Father to be "the light of the world." O then he is just such an one as the soul wants, Luke ii. 32, "A light to lighten the Gentiles." The soul looks within itself, and sees itself a mass of darkness and confusion, at every turn ready to mistake the way; and walking through a wilderness full of pits of destruction, cannot but despair of ever falling on the right way, keeping it, or coming safe to the end of their journey, if they get not a guide. Now, the soul sees Christ as "the sun of righteousness, the wisdom of God, and the power of God; and so acquiesceth in him, Psalm v. 8; Is. xlii. 16; knowing, that as there is a fulness of darkness in them, there is a fulnes of light in him; to whom they may go with all their doubts, and fears, and perplexities, and get all their ravelled cases redd, and learn from him the case they cannot give a name to themselves, Judg. v. 10, 11.

2dly, He is a Priest, who has made the atonement by the sacrifice of himself, and is gone now within the vail to present to the Father his own blood, and thereupon to intercede for sinners, and ever liveth for that end, Heb. vii. 26. Hence says the apostle, Rom. viii. 34, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." O how suitable is this in the saint's eyes to a sinner's case? When sin and guilt is laid home to a man's conscience, there will be many questions in the heart. O, says the soul, "wherewithal shall I come before the Lord?" How shall I get the demands of this law that has me by the throat satisfied, while they run so high above all I can do or suffer? What is able to quench this fire of wrath that has gone out against me for my sins? How will a pardon be obtained? or conscience purged of guilt? But Christ being discovered to the soul in the glory of his priestly office, easeth the distressed soul. For in him he sees all the demands of justice and the law answered to the full; an everlasting righteousness brought in, in which a sinner may stand before the Lord; atoning, peace-making blood, that is able to quench the fire of God's wrath, wash out the deepest dyed guilt, to cancel all the items that stand in justice's debt-book against them, so as they shall never more be chargeable on them, and to purge the conscience from dead works. And thus the soul acquieseth in him as the only refuge.

And then for his intercession the soul beholds a glorious suitableness to its case therein; which makes them rejoice and glory in him, Rom. viii. 34, above-cited. They have much business in the court of heaven, and they cannot manage it. O how sweet to have a friend at court, through whose intercession the purchase of his

blood comes to be first applied to the soul, John xvii. 20, 21, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." They are offending every day; O but in him they have a constant resident at the court of heaven to take up emergent differences, so that it cannot come to a total rupture betwixt God and them, Heb. ix. 24, "For Christ is entered into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us." But how shall guilty creatures have access to the King's presence? Why, through him, Eph. iii. 12; for he is the Father's favourite, the great Secretary of heaven, who leads by the hand (as that word signifies) the suppliants into the presence-chamber. They dare not present their petitions in their own name; then he takes them and presents them, and the Father hears them out of his mouth; and so they cannot but come speed, when he offers them with the incense of his intercession upon the merits of his blood, Rev. viii. 3—5.

3*dly*, He is a King, and that one "against whom there is no rising up." He is "the King of glory. But who is this King of glory? Even the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle," Psal. xxiv. 8. Surely I am, looking to the white side of this displayed glory, every soul that has a spark of grace will say, then he is just whom I want, whom my soul desires. O suitable King of glory! The soul sees it must fight, and will fight; but O weak, weak in battle is it. It is not man enough for the corrupt nature, the ill heart, no not to turn away the face of one of the least of that hellish master's captains; unable to grapple with and overcome the least lust in its own strength, more than a child can grapple with a giant. Satan is too hard for them; the world too sore, especially having friends within them ready to side with these enemies. O what a glorious figure must this King of glory make in their eyes in this case? What rejoicing of heart must the appearance of the Captain of the Lord's host bring to them? Isa. xxxiii. 22, "The Lord is our King, he will save us." In him will the saints acquiesce, and look no where else for help, but be content to go at his back against all the powers of hell, to rencounter Goliath, though they have but stones of the brook for the attack, and adventure on the walls of the cursed Jericho, though they can do nothing but walk about them, and give the shout; for, says the soul, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

O Sirs, have ye ever seen this suitableness of Christ to your case? and do your soul's acquiesce in him as such, as only and fully suit-

able to it? (for that is the sense of the text.) Is *he* and only *he*, in your eyes, the party fit for you in your case? ye are they then that rejoice in Christ Jesus. But, ah! it is to be feared that Christ is a vailed beauty to many of us, and that there are not a few in whose eyes there are other things as suitable and more for them, than that Christ in whom the saints see this heart-attracting glory: Cant. v. 9, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" Consider for evidences of this.

1. There is a generation whose hopes of pardon and salvation are built on the foundation of the mercy of an absolute unatoned God. They see no need of the Lord Jesus; they know him not as the only mean of conveyance of saving mercy to sinners. Do these rejoice in Christ? No, they cannot, nor never will, till their hearts be wounded with an arrow they have not yet felt. Know ye, that the earth shall sooner be forsaken, and the rocks shall sooner be removed for you, than ye shall ever taste of mercy to salvation but through Christ. If ye be out of Christ, mercy cannot save you, seeing it cannot act in prejudice of justice, and God cannot deny himself: Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." If thou rejoice in Christ, and hast seen his suitableness, the sight of an absolute God will be a terror to thee, and thou wilt desire to know no God but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. i. 3; nor wilt thou dare to look to God, but through the vail of the flesh of Christ, Heb. x. 19, 20. Thou wilt expect no pardon, but what comes streaming through the blood of the Mediator, though thou had a flood of tears to fetch it in; nor no embraces from the Lord, but with arms dyed red in that precious atoning blood; nor a smile of his face, but through his wounds. It is the character of Christ's church and people, 1 Thess. i. 1. they are "in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ;" whereby is not only signified their union with both, 1 John i. 3. but they are distinguished from the now rejected synagogue, 1 Thess. ii. 16, which worship the Father, but kill his Son, ver. 15; and therefore please not God, *ib.* for "he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him, John v. 23.

2. There is a generation, who, like Moab, have been at ease from their youth. They confess they are sinners, and who denies that? but they have hitherto stood out proof against convictions of their sin and misery; and that question, "What shall I do to be saved?" never came so close home to them, as these, "What shall I eat?"

or, "Wherewithall shall I be clothed?" And consequently they never saw Christ so suitable to their case, as earthly supplies; for the joy in the remedy cannot rise higher than the apprehension of the evil of the disease. And amongst those who have had their convictions, there are not a few with whom that axe never went to the root of the tree, but the trouble they have had has risen only from their actual sins; but the sin of their nature, that root fixed in the earth with bands of iron and brass, has still lain out of their sight: and therefore vows, resolutions, watchings against and mourning over these have still appeared more suitable to their case, than the sanctifying spirit of Christ, who alone can change our nature. But if thou art a rejoicer in Christ, thou hast got the best view of his glorious suitableness to thy case out of the depths of the corruption of thy nature: Rom. vii. 24, 25, "O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." See how the Lord raised Elisha's credit amongst the people of Jericho, that they might own him for the prophet of the Lord; it was by healing of their waters, 2 Kings ii. 19—22. As for the waters that were in their vessels within their houses, they might several ways correct the unwholesomeness of it themselves; and if nothing would do, they could have cast it to the door: and if Elisha had gone through all their houses and healed their waters they had fetched in their vessels, it would have been a shortlived kindness to them; for when that had been spent, they would have been just where they were before: but Elisha goes to the spring, casts in the salt there, and miraculously heals it; and this sets him on high in their esteem. The application is easy, to Christ's healing of our corrupt natures.

3. There is a generation who are easily diverted from the pursuit of an interest in Christ. If they can get it with ease, well and good it is; but if not, they will let it go: Prov. xxi. 25, "The desire of the slothful killeth him: for his hands refuse to labour." Hence when concience is awakened with some, they will cry for an interest in Christ; they will follow religion with some vigour for a while, but not finding that sweetness in religion that they expected, their tired souls fall even asleep again in the lap of their lusts. As when the Lord brought his people out of Egypt, there was a mixed multitude, that were not Israelites, who went out with them, Exod. xii. 38: they would stay no longer in Egypt, but away with that happy people to the happy land flowing with milk and honey. But when they came to the wilderness, and found not what they expected, they fell a lusting, Num. xi. 4. and downwards; the heat of their hearts after Canaan was cooled, and many a rueful look

they gave back to Egypt again. And the very fish, leeks, and onions of Egypt, that they had eaten there, were sweeter to them than all the milk and honey of Canaan, which they thought they were never like to taste; as appears from the complaints of the Israelites, which they learned from that Egyptian rabble, ver. 5, 6. Such cannot rejoice in Christ; he is not to them either only or fully suitable. But if thou art one that rejoiceth in Christ, thou hast, like Caleb and Joshua, another spirit, even to follow the Lord fully, Num. xiv. 24. Such will leave no mean unessayed in order to get an interest in Christ. It is a matter of the greatest weight, and necessity has no law. Hunger will break through stone walls, Mark vii. 24. If they must die, they will die at Christ's door, knowing with the lepers, 2 Kings vii. 4. that if they go back to the city whence they came, the famine is in that city, and they will die there; and therefore they will put on Ruth's generous resolution, Ruth i. 15, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God;" being as she stedfastly minded, or, as the word is strengthening herself, to wit, against all the discouragements and temptations she had to go back.

4. There is a generation that was never brought to be content to part with all for Christ, and to have him on any terms. There is still some idol that is dearer to them than to part with at any rate. Such a one was that young man, Mark x. 21, 22, "Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." He loved eternal life well, and therefore went away sorrowful; but he loved the world better, and therefore he went away. These cannot rejoice in Christ as only and fully suited to their case. If ye saw a man prigging in a market, and resolved not to have the commodity at the rate proposed, ye would conclude, that that man either can want it, or he knows how to get his want supplied another way. In that John vi. 66. we find some going away from Christ: hereupon Christ puts the question to the twelve, ver. 67, "Will ye also go away?" Mark Peter's answer, ver. 68, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." As if he had said, Lord, it seems those that have gone away think they can fend without thee: but as for us, how can we go away? for if we abide not with thee, we know of no other door to go to, where our wants can be supplied; and

therefore go who will, we must abide. Now, when a man is brought to this, he must needs put a blank in Christ's hand, as Paul, Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He will be ready to part with all with heart and good will. If he rejoice in Christ as the "treasure hid in the field," for joy thereof he will sell all, that the field and treasure may be his, Matth. xiii. 44. From all which it appears, that there are but few who have got this view of Christ as suitable to their case. But happy are they who have got it. "The election hath obtained it, but the rest were blinded."

Thirdly, Christ is suited to the saints' mind. And if it were not so, they could not rejoice in him. Christ is very suitable to the case of every unbeliever, Rev. iii. 18. but, alas? he is not suited to their minds; and therefore they cannot rejoice in him, more than a child in the cutting off of a leg or arm, which yet may be very suitable to its case. Give a natural man his idols, the drunkard his cups, the unclean person his queans, the proud and ambitious man honour, the covetous man his clay-god the world, these are suitable to his mind; but as unsuitable to his case, as a sword for a madman's hand, or poison for a sick man. But Christ is not only suited to the believer's case, but to his mind; for he is by grace made partaker of the divine nature. Christ is that stone, which though disallowed of men, is yet chosen of God, and precious, 1 Pet. ii. 4, "Unto you therefore who believe he is (also) precious." There is not a child of God but Christ answers the desires of their souls in breadth and length, Psal. lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." There is none beside him, none like him, none after him to the believer. I have read a story of the king of Armenia's son, whose wife being taken captive by Cyrus, was asked by the conqueror what ransom he would give for her. Truly, says he, I would redeem her even with my own life. She being set free, and they all come home in peace, some commended Cyrus for one thing, some for another, all admiring him. The king's son asks his wife, what she thought of him. Truly, says she, I did not so much as look on him. Whom looked you on then? says he. On him, replied she, who said he would redeem me with his own life. Thus Christ becomes a covering of the eyes unto those who behold his glory by faith. He is just the person their soul desireth: if they had their choice to make a thousand times, it would still be none but Christ. For to them he is altogether lovely, or, wholly desires, Cant. v. ult: he is most desirable; every thing in or about him is desirable to them. I shall only point at three things wherein Christ is suited to the minds of the saints, and to none others.

1. They are pleased at the heart, that he, even he, should build the temple of the Lord, and that he should bear the glory, as is appointed of God, Zech. vi. 12, 13. The great design of the gospel is, to exalt free grace in Christ; and grace runs through every vein of this contrivance: and as nature is contrary to it, so grace casts the soul into the same mould, Matth. xi. 5, "The poor have the gospel preached to them; the poor are gospelled" (if our language would bear it.) The gospel comes to their ears, and goes down to their hearts, and changes them into the same image; and they are delivered into that form of doctrine, (as the margin hath it), Rom. vi. 17; even as melted metal cast into moulds comes out with the impression figure on it. Alluding to that which David said to Solomon, 1 Chron. xxii. 8, 9. I may say the saints think it not meet that the first Adam should build the temple of the Lord, because he has "shed blood abundantly," at once murdered himself and all his posterity, and has had great wars with heaven; but their souls go along with that, that the temple he built by that son of his, Luke iii. 23—38; the man Christ, typified by Solomon, who was the only man of rest among all the sons of Adam, since their father put them out of rest in God; and who can "give peace and quietness to Israel." See how the psalmist sings to this glorious building, Psal. lxxxix. 1, 2, "Mercy shall be built, said I." There is no merit of men in this building; it is a building of pure mercy; and the building shall go on still, by laying one mercy above another, and that for ever. It is pleasing to the heart of the saints, to be proclaimed dyvors to raise the glory of the Redeemer's love, to be drowned in the debt of free grace, and to have the advantage of an eternity to acknowledge it in, Psal, lxxxix. 1, 3, to throw down their righteousness and their unrighteousness together, to be stepping stones to his glory, and that on which he may mount his throne; to be nothing, and worse than nothing, that Christ may be all. This suits not the minds of natural men. He is "the stone which the builders disallowed:" they were so far from allowing him to be the chief corner-stone, that they laid him by as a stone unfit to have so much as the least place in it. And Peter says, (1 epist. ii. 7, 8,) he is "a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence to the disobedient," or them that believe not; and all natural men are such. Yea, and Christ himself pronounces them blessed, who having him in their offer, are not offended in him, do not see something in him that they cannot away with, Matth. xi. 6, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." And therefore, let men deceive themselves as they will, and contradict this as they please, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." None but the saints of God are thus

pleased with him, as will further appear by what I shall offer next.

2. They are pleased at the heart with his laws. They rejoice in him as a Lawgiver, as well as a Saviour: Is. xxxiii. 22, "The Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." All the saints, and they only, would vote the government to be laid on his shoulders, on whom the Father has laid their help. Christ makes such a reasonable proposal to sinners, as Jepthah did to the Gileadites, Judg. xi. 9, "If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the Lord deliver them before me; shall I be your head?" and all whose hearts the Lord has touched, will heartily acquiesce therein, to wit, that Christ being their hand to save them, he be also their head to rule them. Christ's yoke is welcome to them in every part of it, so far as they know it to be his; his law is suitable to their minds, because their minds and hearts, by the power of grace, are suited to the law, Psalm cxix. 128, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way:" for the law is "written in their hearts," Heb. viii. 10; there are gracious inclinations wrought in their souls towards the several parts of that purity and holiness which is required by the law. For as the law is a sort of transcript of the nature of God, (wherein God shews what a one he is, and what is pleasing to him), so they are made partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. But because this partaking of the divine nature is but imperfect in this present state of the saints, and there is in them an unregenerate part as well as a regenerate, therefore the sin that dwelleth in them, will have its reluctancy against the sweet yoke of Christ: but it is only a partial reluctancy, not total; seeing there is a principle of grace within them likewise, that approves and embraces the law as holy, and the commandment as holy, just and good," Rom. vii. 12. But this is far from the wicked, even the most refined hypocrite, who always finds in the yoke of Christ, "some stone of stumbling, and rock of offence;" some part of holiness, not only that they cannot attain, but that their hearts are never reconciled with; otherwise the Psalmist had laid an unsure ground of comfort to himself in that, Psalm cxix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Both the godly and ungodly man will readily be found to have some sin which the heart cleaveth to by others, or cleaveth to them more than other sins: which is like Eli's, 1 Sam. iii. 13, "the iniquity which he knoweth." Let the trial be made herein, and it will be found, that the lust, and not the law, is suited to the minds of most men; and that they would bestow the blood of their bodies in the matter to blot out that lust crossing command out of the law, rather than find the

efficacy of Christ's blood killing and utterly carrying off that law crossing lust; desiring rather to have the law brought down to them in the point, than themselves brought up to the law. And it will be found contrariwise, in those that rejoice in Christ, to whose minds he is suited, and to whom his laws that directly fly in the face of those lusts that do so easily encompass them, are as chains of gold about their necks, which they love, and approve, and embrace; whereas they are to others as iron fetters; Rom. vii. 12, 22, 23, 24, and viii. 7.

3. Their hearts are well pleased with that fulness of the Spirit of sanctification that dwells in him to be communicated; and that the Father has appointed him to be the head of influences, 1 Cor. i. 30, 31, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us—sanctification:—that, according as it is written, He that glorifieth, let him glory in the Lord." And thus they will be found to rejoice more in the grace of God without them in Christ, than the very grace of God within them: as he whose own the well is, rejoiceth more in the spring, than all his vessels full of it; though a stranger will rejoice more in the fulnesss of the vessel given him, than the fulness of the fountain which is not his. "Thy spirit is good, (says the Psalmist), lead me into the land of uprightness," Psalm cxliii. 10. O but the Spirit is good in the saints' eyes, and it is good that the fulness of the Spirit is lodged in him. To whom sin is hateful, and the spirit of the world an unwelcome guest, the Spirit of holiness must needs be precious: where the power and stain of sin are loathsome, as well as the guilt heavy, the water that came out of Christ's side, will be suited to their minds, as well as the blood. Where the love of God dwells, the Spirlt will be precious, as that whereby they are "changed into the same image from glory to glory." And as the Father hath appointed him head of influences, as the great channel of conveyance of spiritual influences, so do they acquiesce in that, by chusing him as such to them, Hos. i. ult. "Then shall the children of Judah, and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land." But seeing in others the spirit of the world reigns, the Spirit of holiness is not suited to their minds: for "what agreement hath light with darkness?" or what pleasure can an owl take in the sun, that hates the light? or they whose hearts are glued to sin, take in that which is destructive thereto? Yea, and that seeming holiness which some natural men attain to, is but the product of nature, assisted with external revelation, and the common operations of the Spirit, while they remain estranged from the life of God through Jesus Christ, who is the life of the saints.

It is not among nature's inclination to go out of itself for sanctification; but nature's way here is for a man to go in to himself for it. The way of gospel sanctification, as well as of justification, is a stumbling-block in the way of unbelievers, 1 Cor. i. 23, 30. See how they stumbled at it, John vi. 57, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Compared with ver. 63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." But mark vers. 60, 66, "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying, who can hear it? From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." That soul whose choice is the humble dependent life on Christ as the head of influences, going out of itself for sanctification to Christ in the way of believing, is a happy soul. See how the text joins these together, "worshipping God in spirit, and rejoicing in Christ Jesus," as the altar of burning-offering where the fire continually burns, which they may fetch to set to the incense of their duties. And so much for the first thing in this rejoicing, which is the main thing. I shall be more brief in the rest, which do of course follow on this holy complacency of the soul in Christ, and the mystery of Christ.

Secondly, Then there is in this rejoicing in Christ, "a rolling of the soul over on him for all. Rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." The child of God beholding him suited to the divine perfections, to his case, and to his mind, goeth out to him, and embraceth him accordingly, laying the whole stress of his soul upon him, taking him joyfully for his case. This is intimated to us in the parable of the "treasure hid in a field: the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field, Matth. xiii. 44. The gospel is that field, and Christ is the treasure. Observe, (1.) To whomsoever the gospel comes, they may have Christ if they will: he offers himself in it. For the treasure is in the field, and the field and treasure are to be sold. (2.) Few see the glory and excellency of Christ held forth in the gospel, and therefore he and his gospel too are slighted. Many go over the field, but find no treasure in it, behold not the riches of the glory of the mystery of Christ, and hidden wisdom of God, therein; and therefore says, what is that field more than another, "that beloved more than another beloved?" (3.) Whensoever the glory of Christ is discovered to a soul, that soul is pleased with him, beholds him as an upmaking portion; so as the man concludes, that if he had him, he would have enough in him. For he has joy thereof on the discovery, and is willing to part

with all for it. (4.) That soul will not rest till the happy bargain be made, and Christ be his, Ruth iii. ult. (5.) That soul quits the gripe of all other to live on Christ, to take him for and instead of all; he lays his all upon the treasure: if it hold good, he has all; if it should fail, he has nothing. From that time that treasure is all his stock, all that he has to lippen to. Happy that soul that thus rejoiceth in Christ. That is the wise man, who digs till he comes to the rock, and then with joy builds on it. The soul finds it has a heavy weight of wants, weakeness, and miseries, which it is neither able to bear nor throw off; but finding that Christ is every way suitable to such a one's case, and hearing such a comfortable voice of Christ in the gospel, as the old man in Gibeah gave to the Levite, while he sat in the street of the city, and no man offered to take him into his house, "Let all thy wants lie upon me," Judg. xix. 18, 20. the soul heartily complies with the offer, and casts all its burdens on Christ for time and eternity, Psal. lv. 22; and especially these two.

1. Their weight of guilt.
2. Their weight of duties.

First, Their weight of guilt is laid over upon him "through faith in his blood," Rom. iii. 25. Guilt is a heavy load, able to sink the soul into the lowest hell; but the soul comes as the offerer under the law, and lays its hand on the head of the sacrifice, thereby casting over this weight on a crucified Christ. They come with their polluted souls to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks mercy, and speaks away wrath from the guilty creature, Heb. xii. 24. Christ is the city of refuge; and thither they go, and throw themselves into it, as the only place suitable for them to dwell in, Heb. vi. 18. All without this city of refuge is under the dominion of the law; there death reigns; there justice is doing, and ready to do more execution; there floods run sweeping away the refuges of lies; there the heavens are black, the windows of heaven opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up, and a broken law without intermission raining curses on the guilty heads. Wherefore the soul at first makes haste to escape, as Lot was bidden do to get out of Sodom; and throwing itself into Christ as the city of refuge, the only place where no wrath can fall on the guilty, carefully abides there, and dare not set out its head without the gates for ever, Psal. xci. 1, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," Verse 2, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge." I have said, I do say it, and will ever say it, that "he is my refuge," to whom I will betake myself, and under whose protection I may be safe, as the chickens under the wings of

the hen, as the word the Holy Ghost here useth is explained, Ruth ii. 12, "The Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." And thus Christ himself holds out that safe covert of his righteousness and grace, which he offers to sinners in the gospel, Matth. xxiii. 37, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" They are weak, and in hazard of being made a pray; but under the wings of his grace they may find safety, tender affection, and cherishing for their dejected souls, Psal. xci. 4; and therefore come they to "trust under his wings." His blood is the only propitiation to which they lippen their souls, his righteousness their only cover, his satisfaction their only plea, or ground on which they will plead mercy, his payment of the debt their only plea for their discharge; for they have had the sentence of death in themselves carried and thrust home into their souls by the law, that they might trust in him who raiseth the dead, while others keep up their confidence in the flesh. Such the Lord pronounceth blessed, Matth. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

Secondly, Their weight of duties is laid over on him.

1. For performance. Christ lays his yoke upon the believer, and he receives it, and lays himself and it over on himself again as the fountain of strength: Matth. xi. 29, "Take my yoke upon you," says Christ, "and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And says the Psalmist, Psal. cvi. 9, 10, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken." Hence it becomes a sweet and easy yoke, which before was a burden unsupportable. How can that be? Why, duties are indeed a dead weight while laid on purely by the hand of the law, and borne merely by virtue of the poor remains of that strength which the first Adam left us; which in effect is but mere weakness, and cannot make us bear it more than a child can bear a mountain, John xv. 5, "Without me ye can do nothing." But as for the yoke of Christ, it is laid on with a promise of strength, and with it is laid into the heart a principle of rolling over the soul and it on Christ again: Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ," says the apostle: "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And so he bears the heavy end of his own yoke, and bears them and their burden too. Thus the believer has (to speak with reverence) a kind of derived omnipotency, Phil. iv. 13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his

good pleasure, chap. ii. 13. He works the will for the work, and the work for us when he has wrought the will for it. A vast weight may be on a little stone in a building, without its sinking, when it, and all that is on it, lies upon a rock. And hence the 11th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews is spent in shewing the mighty things the saints have done and suffered by faith. For in a believer there is a most suitable match, sufficiency joined with insufficiency, 2 Cor. iii. 5. strength with weakness, all fulness with wants and poverty; even the mighty God with worm Jacob. And thus the believer goes out of himself for performance of duties, while the hypocrite goes in to himself. For it is a plain truth, that the way and manner of working follows the manner of being and living, and every man will act as he lives. Now, the believer lives by Christ, John vi. 57. and therefore must act by him; and with the same care will endeavour to hold off lippening to his own strength, as to his own righteousness, Psalm lxxi. 16; and to take Christ for sanctification, as well as for righteousness, God having made him both to his people. Natural men are without Christ, *i. e.* separate from him, John xv. 5; and so are as trees by themselves, having their own root in the ground: and hence for the fruit of duty all the natural powers of their souls are called together as in a solemn day, Josh. xxiv. 18, 19: but because their root is rottenness, their blossom goes up as dust; and their fruits are like the apples of Sodom, which are very pleasant to the eye, but being cut up, are found nothing but a heap of loathsome matter; and no wonder, seeing they grow by the dead sea of self. But the godly are branches whose fruit depends on influence from Christ, as the true vine into which they are ingrafted: hence the bent of the believer's soul lies that way, not to trust his natural powers, gifts, nay, nor inherent graces either; seeing these depend on Christ, as light on the sun, and are but rays, not the fountain of light, and therefore must still be fed from the fountain; but to go out of himself, in the way of believing, Phil. iv. 13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And therefore, while others like common boatmen serve themselves with their oars, seeing they never go out of the barren region of self; they will depend on Christ for the blowings of his Spirit, having a mind for Immanuel's land.

2. For acceptance of their duties, Heb. xi. 4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." God in Christ is the alone object of the saints' worship. The saints' labour in duties which is accepted, is a labour of love, Heb. vi. 10. Our love to God is but the reflex of God's love to us, 1 John iv. 19. God's special love to us darts its beams unto us no other way but

through the veil of the flesh of Christ; and it must be through the same veil that our love returns to him, and itself and its fruits accepted, Eph. i. 6. Duties rightly done and acceptably, are the returns of influences from heaven; which are communicated through Christ, who lies at the fountain-head, as the great mean of communion betwixt God and the saints: and as influences come from God by him, so the duty is directed to God through him. As God will not accept, so the saints acting as saints dare not offer for acceptance, prayer, or praise, but through him, Eph. i. 3; nor any good work, though it were a sacrifice of their own blood, but as dipt, yea, "washed in the blood of the Lamb," Rev, vii. 14. They will not expect any of their sacrifices to be accepted, but such as are laid on the altar Christ, which sanctifies the gift. Here the stress is laid for acceptance by the saints; to which the view they have of God's holiness, the naughtiness of their own and their best duties, their complacency in God's method of grace, and contrivance of salvation through Christ, and that gospel-turn that grace has given their hearts, do determine them; while the natural man is a stranger and blind to all these, and so rushes forward to the throne with his duties, not honouring the Son, and thereby dishonouring the Father; for worshipping in the name of Christ, is no less than faith in his blood.

Thirdly, In this rejoicing in Christ there is a rest of the heart in him as a fit match for the soul. For as in marriage there is, in the first place, a view of such a person as a fit match, whereupon follows the choice and acceptance; and in case the person chosen answer the expectation, (and none can ever have too high thoughts of Christ), there ariseth from thence a rest of the heart in such a person, which is the solid joy of that lot, Ruth iii. 1; Prov. xxxi. 11: so when the soul is pleased with Christ as every way suitable, it rolls itself over on him, and rests in him as a fit match. Our first father Adam did us two ill turns. He led us off the path of life, not knowing how to get on it again; and so left us with a conscience full of guilt. He led us away from the living God, not knowing how to get to him again; and so left us with a heart full of unsatisfied desires. Hence the sons of Adam quickly find themselves like the "horse leech having two daughters, crying, Give, give; a restless conscience, and a restless heart; to each of which they must needs say, Shall I not seek for thee, that it may be well with thee? And so the soul sets to work; and the first way it goes, is, through dry places, seeking rest, as the devil when he goes out of a man. And,

1. For the conscience; the natural man goes through the dry and

barren region of the law, seeking rest to it, "going about to establish his own righteousness," Rom. ix. 3. The sun is gone down on them, and therefore they light their candles, and compass themselves about with their own sparks. And in what measure that restlessness has seized their consciences, so far do they go the round of law obedience to still it. The consciences of some are easily lulled asleep; a few coldrife wishes will do it with some; some shreds of morallity serve to wrap others in, in which they can lie at peace; others can get no rest till they go the round of all the external duties of religion; nay, so restless are the consciences of some, that it will cost them to do many things, with Herod, to remove many beloved lusts that keep the conscience unquiet, to water the couch with tears, and lull it asleep with mournful songs of prayers and confessions, to bind it down with vows, resolutions, and engagements of reformation, and after all carefully to watch against those things that disturbed it before. And yet for all this, because it is not sprinkled with blood, it can get no solid rest; it gets but an unsound nap, out of which it will have a fearful awakening. It is still but "as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast, Prov. xxiii. 34. Now, Christ finds his elect in this same case, seeking rest to their consciences in the law: and whatever rest they may sometimes find it, he doth at length set fire to their nest, and draw the pillow from under their head, till he make them effectually dispair of ever finding rest there to their consciences, whose wounds bleed still, and spurn all remedy from their best and most serious duties; and then discovers to them, and by his Spirit draws them, so as they come to the blood of sprinkling, the only conscience purging remedy: And here the soul finds rest to the conscience: Heb. ix. 14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Chap. xii. 24, "Ye are come—to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." 1 John i. 7, "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The conscience rests in him; of which before in the second head. But that which I aim at here, is,

2. The rest of the heart; which the natural man and the Christian both seek: but the soul out of Christ never finds it; only they that are in Christ find it, and find it in him. For clearing of which, consider,

1*st*, Our hearts naturally are full of desires of happiness, which crave satisfaction. Even when desire fails, Eccles. xii. these are still fresh and vigourous; and a man shall as soon cease to be a man,

as cease to desire to be a happy man. The heart of man is an empty craving thing, of a large capacity. And wants are interwoven with our nature, and desires of the supply of these wants, that man seems to be little else but a compound of wants and desires, which are enlarged as the ocean. Heap together unto Christless hearts all perfections that are to be found in all the men of the earth, increase the heap to them with all that is to be found in other creatures, all would be overwhelmed with a vast infinite mass of wants, as a filing of gold under a mountain; and their desires after all remain wide as the sea, seeing the soul, by its natural make and constitution, is capable of an infinite good. Ye shall as soon tell the motes that appear restlessly flying through a new-swept house, where the beams of the sun are let in, number the stars, and tell to the least grain of sand by the sea-shore as ye shall come to the last desire of a man's heart, if you keep off an infinite good. Behold, with what a wide mouth the heart of man appears: satisfied it must be, or it can have no rest; but where will it find an answerable fulness? Peace and rest they would have; but, alas! the way of peace they have not known, Rom. iii. 17; there is none that seeketh after God, ver. 11, though their throat is an open sepulchre, ver. 13, standing always open, crying, Give, give, and never saying it is enough, Prov. xxx. 16. Hence,

2dly, The natural man goeth through the dry places of the creation, seeking rest, but findeth none (Jer. ii. 3,) to his restless heart. They are bewildered travellers, that have lost their way; they wander in the wilderness of created things, but find no city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainteth in them: for Solomon hits their miserable case, and plainly shews how the matter is with them, Eccl. x. 15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." The man goes about extracting the sweet of every created thing he can reach for satisfaction, squeezeth the sap out of them; but they will not, cannot answer his expectation. They are in quest of satisfaction; but are in that case of the Sodomites at Lot's house when struck with blindness, where all were for the door, but one gripes one part of the wall for it, another gripes another part, never one of them could find it. Some fix on the profits of the world, and drink greedily at these broken cisterns: their hungry hearts fly at them as a ravenous bird at the prey, Prov. xxiii. 5. And the cream and strength of their affections are spent on these; and yet at length they find they are but spending their labour for which is not bread, Is. lv. 2. Some hang at the breasts of the world's pleasures, lawful or unlawful; and often press so hard for satisfaction in these, that

they wring out blood instead of milk; and as men hammering a flinty rock for water, bring forth fire flashing on their faces. The man is like the hungry beast, which if it abide within the hedge rives up all the red earth; neither doth that satisfy, but they break over the hedge too, if so be the forbidden fruit can afford that rest, which that which is allowed cannot. Some pursue the lust of the eye, but that is never satisfied with seeing; some the lust of the flesh, and the more it is gratified, the more it craves; and some, the pride of life, and that can never be satisfied, Hab. ii. 5; Is. v. 14. Some soar a little above the common gang of mankind; and they seem to espy in knowlege what is not to be found in other things, and their souls fly out in an eager pursuit after satisfaction in that, which indeed bids fairest for it among all created things: but what comes it to at length? The soul finds the way to it sore travel, Eccl. i. 13; and after they have travelled far and sore for it, their hearts are stung with these questions, Job xxviii. 12, "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Vers. 20, 21, Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air." And what scraps of it is gathered here and there, are far from giving the promised rest to the heart: Eccl. i. ult. "For much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow." Thus men labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for vanity. The world is like the air in a summer-day full of insects; and natural men are like a company of foolish children, one running to catch one, another to catch another; and when all is done, none of them can fill the hand. And O how humbling is it to think, that after the restless heart is disappointed in real enjoyments, it goes about to satisfy and feed itself with mere fancies; so that the imagination is let loose, and, like quicksilver, rolls and runs hither and thither, skips like a bird from bush to bush, forms to itself a thousand airy nothings, traverses the world, and turns the man into a thousand fine shapes, giving the man a multitude of possessions, if not possessions of the hand, yet possessions of the heart; as that word properly signifies, Job xvii. 11; as if the foolish heart, when it had tried all other means in vain, would strive to dream itself full and happy? But when that "wandering of the desire," or "walking of the soul," is stopped," Eccl. vi. 9, "he awaketh, and behold, his soul is faint." But will the tired soul sit down and rest after all? No, no, Isa. lvii. 10; but goes back again to the same door where it has got a hundred refusals. O, thinks the man, if I had such a thing, I would be well. May be he gets it; but he finds for as big as it was afar off, it will not fill his hand, when he gripes it; but it must be

filled, else no rest: hence new labour to bring forth new disappointments without end.

3*dly*, Christ finds the elect soul in the day of converting grace, thus wandering, and seeking rest among the rest of the blinded world, brings it to despair of ever finding it there, discovers himself to it as the fountain of satisfaction, as he opened Hagar's eyes to see the well when she had laid by the child for death. And then the man hears a voice in the innermost part of his soul, from Christ, by his Spirit, Psalm lxxxi. 10, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." I can do and will do for you what all the creatures cannot; "I will fill you." Many a time you have opened your mouth wide enough to your idols, so wide, that it has been no small pain to get it closed again, and yet still empty; but now "open it to me, I will fill it." Lay the mouth of your soul on the breasts of my consolations, and they shall flow abundantly." The word for believing comes from a root that signifies *to nurse;* as if faith were nothing else but the laying of the soul on the breasts of Christ's consolations, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, that they may suck, and be satisfied, Isa. lxvi. 11. And truly the soul is like the hungry infant, that gapes, weeps, cries, sucks every thing that comes near its mouth; yet cannot tell what it would have, but is still restless, till the mother set it to the breast: and then it rests: and so doth the believing soul in Christ. The heaven-born soul is seeking a match for itself, but cannot find it among all the creatures; none of them are commensurable to the desires of the soul; there is always something wanting to satisfaction in every thing the soul meets with, till it come to Christ; and there the soul finds at length a match for it in its enlarged desires, and so takes up its everlasting rest in him; and, after many years' restlessness and watching, falls asleep in the bosom of God in Christ, in whom they have all, and abound; for coming to him, they come to the utmost of their desires. Ye may take up the rest of the heart in Christ in these two particulars.

1. The desires of the soul centering and meeting in Christ. "Unite my heart," says the Psalmist, Psal. lxxxvi. 11. The heart naturally is as it were in a thousand pieces, each of them following some one or another vanity; and the desires of the heart, like a flock of hungry ravening fowls, are scattered on the face of the earth, crying and catching what they can get, till a crucified Christ, in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead, is discovered by an eye of faith; and then where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together, 1 Cor. ii. 2; and then as the scattered rays of the sun are contracted in the burning-glass, and fix on one thing, so

the desires of the soul are brought to meet in one point, even in him, Psal. xxvii. 4; Luke x. 41, 42. The heart is never right till it come to this; for while the natural man's heart is in its blind ramble in quest of happiness, and his desires are sent out to bring it in from all quarters, no wonder some of them stumble upon Christ, as those John vi. 34, who said unto Christ, "Lord, evermore give us this bread:" seeing they have a double heart, a heart, and a heart, why may not Christ get one, while the world and lusts keep another? But that is not the rest of the heart in Christ, the desires of the heart not meeting in him, but parted between him and others. As Jacob found his marriage with Leah and Rachel both, not a rest, but a rack to his heart; so shall the divided heart ever be found a restless heart.

But alas! may some say, I find indeed desires in my heart going out after Christ; but as true it is, there are many desires in going another way, yea, a contrary way. Can such a heart be said to rejoice and rest in Christ? For answer to this, consider, that as faith is not perfected in this life, so neither is the believer's rejoicing and resting on Christ. The flesh hath its desires as well as the spirit, which surely go another way than to Christ. Gal. v. 17, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." And therefore though they that believe do enter into rest, and they that come to Christ do even find rest in him here, yet there remains a rest to the people of God, which they shall get in heaven. But to clear this case, consider,

1*st*, In what channel runs the main stream of thy desires? Though a river may on each side have its small strands that run very irregularly, yet we account the main stream and channel, that wherein the several brooks that make it up, do meet. And thus in the child of God, though there may be many irregular desires, yet the main stream of desire in them goes Christ-ward and God-ward. The Psalmist wanted not desires of the flesh; yet, says he, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple," Psalm xxvii. 4, because it was the main thing. In the natural man it is quite contrary; his main desires are after the world and his lusts, the bent of his soul lies that way, the strength of his affections are spent on these, so that there is nothing left for Christ but a few languishing desires, that bear no more proportion to his desires after other things, than a little side-stream to the main stream of the water. Thus the Psalmist distinguishes himself from natural men, Psalm iv.

6, 7, "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." But remember I am now speaking of desires after Christ as a rest to the heart, not a rest to the conscience; for seeing "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life," the terrors of a restless conscience may make the chief stream of desire go after Christ for rest to the conscience, as the foolish virgins when they saw their lamps were gone out, and the bridegroom coming, left all their other trafficking wherein they had spent their former time, and went to buy oil, Matth. xxv. And this leads me to a

2*d* Thing. Consider whether or not thine absolute desires do center and meet in Christ. If ye were left this day to your free choice, never to be called to an account for it whatever way ye made it, either Christ or lusts, on whom would your desires meet, where would they center? Is there so much native beauty, and glory, and fulness for heart satisfaction seen by you in Christ, as would draw your desires after him; ye are the virgins whose heart Christ has, Cant. i. 3. Let the natural man's desires after Christ be never so strong, I may well say, they do not so much desire him because they would have him, as because they cannot want him: they do in this what they would not, and therefore it is not they that do it, but conscience that dwelleth in them. And on the contrary, the saints have their desires after lusts; but so complying with them, do what they would not; and therefore it is not they, but sin that dwelleth in them.

3*dly*, Consider what are those desires in thy heart that swallow up all other, as the sea in which all the rivers do meet? If thou can say, it is the desires after Christ in thy heart, thou art one that rejoiceth and resteth in Christ, and a real saint: Psal. lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." In the heart of a saint there are other sheaves besides Christ's sheaf, but all others must bow to his. Do thy desires after Christ rebound on thy desires after other things, towards the weakening and wearing them off? though ye see ye come but little speed, it is a good sign: Rom. vii. 22, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." Compared with ver. 24. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" The godly soul may have many woeful desires, but the heart would be content to deny itself of all of them, if it could be rid of them, for Christ. But on the contrary, the natural man's desire after other things than Christ, swallows up all other, like

Pharaoh's lean kine, eating up the fat ones, and yet still lean. His desires of Christ must yield to his desires of lusts; seeing the hungry heart craves satisfaction, and they never yet found as much sweetness to the heart in Christ, as they have found in other things; and therefore would judge it but a sorry bargain to sell all for the one pearl; and their souls are never content to part with all for Christ, as was the case with the young man, Mark x. 21, 22.

2. The desires of the heart "abiding on him for satisfaction." The soul, after long wandering amongst the creatures for satisfaction, at length seeing through them, beholds that all is vain and unsatisfactory; and beholding the fulness of Christ by faith, lays hold on him, and rests in him as an object adequate to the desires of the heart, as one that is match for the boundless desires of the soul, and in whom it may be filled: Psal. lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." And thus the soul is brought at length to an utmost of its desires; there they terminate as on an object completely satisfactory. This is their rest, and here they will stay. Here is the treasure hid, and here will they halt and dig for it. This is the city which they find to rest in; there will they abide; and there and nowhere else, will they seek a place wherein to dwell. This rest of the heart in Christ, is sometimes in some of God's children screwed up far higher, when they are filled as with marrow and with fat, in the sensible enjoyment of him; yea and have as much as they can hold in this frail state; when they are filled with joy in believing, even joy unspeakable and full of glory; beholding the unsearchable boundless riches of Christ, and assuredly know that all is theirs, then they can say with Paul, Phil. iv. 18, "I have all, and abound." But this is too high to be a mark of a saint, and would leave most part of them at most times out of the roll of saints. But he whose desires abide on Christ for satisfaction, has taken up his rest in him; for he can say with David, "This is all my desire, although he make it not to grow," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. The heart could be content with Christ alone, but nothing can content it without him. And this does so far dry up the devouring deeps of carnal desires, wherewith the soul was before plagued, whose gaping mouths it was the man's constant work to seek to satisfy, that the soul never goes abroad for satisfaction among the creatures in such manner as it was wont.. Christ becomes to the soul a covering of the eyes, as Abraham was to Sarah; and a draught of the water of life quenches that scorching thirst they had before after creature-sweetness, John iv. 14. They give over the trade of begging at the creature's door, and the door of their lusts, seeing their hearts are

persuaded there is bread enough in their Father's house, and to spare, Luke xv. 17. When the soul comes to Christ, it takes up its rest in him, saying, upon the discovery of him, as one was wont to say when rising from prayer, "Be closed now, O mine eyes, be closed; for henceforth shall ye never see a more lovely object." Hence,

1*st*, The gracious soul can be content with Christ alone, Psalm lxxiii. 25. forecited. This is plainly the attainment of all that attain to Christ. Every man that finds the treasure hid in the field, and the one pearl of great price, sells all he hath with joy to purchase them; which he could not do, if he could not be contented with the treasure and pearl alone. And by the want of this disposition of soul Christ discovered the hypocrisy of that young man spoken of Mark x. 21. For certainly that heart is divided that can have no contentment in Christ, unless it turn aside by the flocks of his companions also: it loves him not as a suitable match for the soul, seeing the heart cannot rest in him. Wherefore the gracious soul sees that satisfaction in Christ, that it can live on him without its former lusts, Prov. iii. 8; Hos. xiv. 8; yea and though all the things in the world be gone from him, while his God is not gone, his rest and rejoicing will be to the fore, Hab. iii. 17, 18; John xvi. 22.

2*dly*. Nothing can fill Christ's room with them, have what they will; the want of him squeezes the sap out of all other enjoyments to them, Psalm xxx. 7. As if a thousand cyphers were set together without a figure, the total will still be naught; so unto the gracious soul all without Christ is naught, because he is the rest of their hearts. Hence says the apostle, Phil. iii. 8, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." The worldly man's indefinite wish says, he is too easily pleased; it is any good, Psalm iv. 6; it is any one he seeks it of: but the godly man's wish is very particular, "the light of thy countenance;" it is the Lord he seeks it of; the favour of God in Christ, or nothing. As the raven sent out of the ark missed not the ark while there was carrion enough without it, to feed on; so give natural men whereon to feed their lusts, and something to appease their conscience, they will reign as kings without Christ. These are their good things, Luke xvi. 25. But the heart of the child of God will say, Lord, what wilt thou give me, if I go without thyself the chief good?

Question. But doth the heart of a saint always thus rest in Christ? Answer. There is no doubt but sometimes one that has

taken up his heart's rest in Christ, may fall off his rest, that he may have his soul to bespeak to return to his rest again. Saints may sometimes take up their rest under some created shadow, but they will not dwell there. "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd," chap. iv. 9. But even in this case there will be found a twofold difference betwixt them and natural men.

1. The saints never get such kindly rest as the natural man in these things. The reason is plain; the natural man is in his own element in that case; the saint is not. The natural man is as one who is at home in his own bed, the other is as one abroad, 2 Sam. xii. 4. This is clear from the case of the spouse, Cant. v. 2. She is asleep, but it is very unkindly rest she gets. We may notice here three things that make it so. (1.) There is a thorn of self-condemnation in the conscience: I sleep; I am out of order, this is not the case I should be in. The soul is accused of ingratitude to Christ. Christ is at the door, he knocks, and has stood over-long. "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" says conscience. "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" says the Lord, Jer. ii. 31. And the man is speechless, like Jonah; of whom it may be observed, Jonah iv. 10, 11, that he answered not again; and like Job, chap. xl. 5. (2.) There is a wound of self-dissatisfaction in the heart, "My heart waketh." There is a secret discontent with this condition, because the enjoyment of Christ is not in it. The little grace that is left frowns on corruption, though it is not able to master it. Such persons would be glad of Christ's return, though their souls are fettered that they cannot go after him, till he put in his hand by the hole of the lock. (3.) There is a faint moving of the affections after him: "It is the voice of my beloved." He is the beloved still. Though the soul has written the bill of divorce, in fond affection to another, yet she would not sign it for ten thousand worlds. Though she is not able to rise to let him in, yet she cannot think of his going quite away. It is another sort of rest the natural man has in these things; where there is but one principle, to wit, that of corruption: so that whatever disquiet conscience may give him at a time, yet it is but a carnal defiled conscience, Tit. i. 15, and cannot disturb the heart's rest in lusts; as Balaam's conscience left still his heart in love with the wages of unrighteousness, 2 Pet. ii. 15, though his conscience stood in the way of winning them. And though the heart of the natural man cannot be free of disquiet, seeing it is impossible to find satisfaction in the creatures; yet it is not because Christ is not in that case of his for the rest of his heart, but because the creature cannot answer the hungry appetite of his heart; yet though one cannot, he hopes an-

other may, Isa. lvii. 10; and so all that it amounts to, is, the sluggard turning him on his bed. Which brings me to a

2. Thing, namely, the Lord does always at length hunt the saint out of his starting-holes, till his soul return to its rest. Hence says he, Hos. ii. 6, 7, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now." As the needle in the compass touched with a good loadstone, rests not till it turn towards the north; so the man who is partaker of the divine nature, and is born from above, will get no kindly rest with his affections on the earth; disturbed they will be till they be set on things above. The saint for his heart's rest goes back to God from the creatures, Jer. iii. 22, 23; the natural man for his goes from one creature to another; and when one stream runs dry, goes to another, being conjured as it were within the circle of created things. For why, the curse of the serpent is on such persons; and though they may change their particular place, their holes of the earth, yet dust is their meat, and on their belly must they go. They want the seraphim's wings which grace gives the saints, and so never mount heavenward. We do not read of one among all the saints more like a bird that wandereth from his nest than Solomon. His father had warned him, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, to "serve the Lord with a perfect heart," that is, according to the import of the word, a peaceable, quiet, entire heart, resting in God, not falling in pieces, and gading after idols; "and with a willing mind," a mind taking delight in God, without which the heart cannot lie at peace in him. But when Solomon grew old, his heart though it was sincere, yet it was not perfect with the Lord, 1 Kings xi. 4. He fell off his rest in God, and went after idols, verse 5. And many a door he went to, while he travelled through the book of creation, as his book of Ecclesiastes tells us; but he was repulsed at them all, and at length brought back again to God, with that report, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." For though a son may vague a while, yet seeing his father has a house, he will grow wise at length, and return to it: Psal. xc. 1, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations;" though sometimes they are not at home, but lodge elsewhere. But the common beggar must needs be still going from house to house, and so spend the time of his life, because he has no certain dwelling-place.

Lastly, In this rejoicing in Christ there is a confession of him unto salvation, Rom. x. 10, "With the heart man believeth unto righte-

ousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." This the word which the apostle useth in the text, and properly signifies to glory in a thing, doth plainly intimate. And as the image of God that was impressed on man's soul in his creation did shine through his body, as the candle through the lantern; so that complacency, confidence, and rest of the heart in Christ, of which before, that in themselves are hidden things, will nevertheless shine forth in the saint's outward conversation. There is such a dexterity that some hypocrites have in aping God's children in their conversation, that it will be very difficult to know what to say in this point; which I profess I would rather hear of than speak of. But being convinced the text intimates a difference, I dare not quite pass it; hoping the Lord that has laid it in the way, will give something that may be useful; though I would not have people to lay the main stress of their evidence of their state here, but to use it as an adminicle or help to let them in to the view of what lies more inwardly. I shall consider this holy glorying in Christ, and confession of him, with respect to men's ordinary conversation, and with respect to their conversion in suffering times; and I think the text looks to both.

First, With respect to the gracious soul's ordinary conversation.

1. This inward rejoicing in Christ wears off that air of pride and self-conceit, that is seen about many professors vainly puffed up with their fleshly mind. They will not only have humbleness of mind, but they will be clothed with humility as an upper garment, 1 Pet. v. 5. Whatever may be attributed to the natural temper of any, it is hard to think a saint will in his ordinary conversation shew such an air of vanity about him, as still to make him loathsome to tender and discerning Christians.

2. Grace will circumcise the self-commending lips. Boasters are in the black roll with those that have but a form of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 2. They that rejoice in Christ, feel such a weight of corruption in the heart, that it will be an embargo on their tongue, to keep them from a course of proclaiming their own goodness, as most men, but not all men, not faithful men, do, Prov. xx. 6. But it is sad to think of the strain of many professors' discourse, of their condition, abilities, attainments, &c.; where is not wanting still a fat sacrifice to self, notwithstanding acknowledgements of God's goodness in bestowing these on them; like the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, who "stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican."

3. Gracious souls will readily discover in their serious converse,

a native tendency in the strain of their discourse towards the corruption of nature, and the riches and freedom, necessity and power of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. There is something charming in these things to them that rejoice in Christ. Nearest the heart, we say, nearest the mouth. Grief and love are two passions that mightly fix the mind on their objects. And the one is their greatest burden, the other their greatest support. And how can it be otherwise, seeing the great design of the gospel, into the mould of which they are cast, is to exalt Christ and free grace, and that upon the ruins of nature; to make Christ all, and the creature nothing? Rom. iv. 16. But there is a generation to whom these things in preaching are tasteless as the white of an egg. And in conversation they are knocked in the head with them; and are so far from entertaining others with these matters, that they cannot entertain them from others, unless it be by some general expressions, that it may be known they are not ignorant of these things, which they look upon as common things, and treat them as unclean. I think I observe in Paul's epistles a more than ordinary elevation of his spirit when he comes on these points. It is quite contrary in many professors, whose tongues are ready interpreters of the mind in matters of controversy, this and the other duty, opinion, enlargement, attainment, &c.; but when these come, they stumble and faulter, because the heart runs not that way.

4. They will readily be found, as occasion offers, to be no strangers to heart-exercise about their state, whether they be in Christ or not, and will discover something of their experience that way; or if they do not, such converse as hits these things they will be ready to make welcome, and will not snuff at them, and weary of them, as if they were out of their element; for they "rejoice in Christ Jesus;" their life is in the "light of his countenance," but it does not always shine to them. And therefore the question of the heart will be, Cant. iii. 3, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" But there are many who have no changes, and therefore they fear not God; and therefore, like Gallio, they care for none of these things; they are rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing that way. They have had a reel among their affections some time; and now they think they believe, and keep up the practice of religious duties, and there is an end of it. But for that part of religion that lies about the vitals of it, that is not their study, yea, and the hearing of it grates upon their ears.

5. Rejoicing in Christ Jesus will make men tender of other Christians, in judging of them. Hence is that exhortation, Gal. vi. 1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual

restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." The man that finds his own sore running on him, which leaves him no glorying but in Christ, will be fair to handle the sores of his brethren with a spirit of meekness, and be ready to bless God, that it was not he who was so left off the Lord. But that disposition of many, which makes them conclude people's hypocrisy from particular slips in their way, appears most opposite to this, and to be the product of self-confidence. And as they thus trample on those that are fallen below them, it will be found they very little honour or value those that are above them in spiritual tenderness and experience of religion, as if all were to be cut off that are beyond their measure: for the truth is they are heart enemies to the power of godliness; and where it shines most, especially outshining them, their carnal hearts rise most against it; and in such a case will readily pitch on their sores, and slightingly say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" 1 Sam. x. 11. It is but one in a place (very few) that will say, And who is their Father? acknowledging heartily the free grace of God, that gives to every one as he will, whose eye is not evil, because the Lord's is good; but love the Lord's image wherever they see it.

6. Such as rejoice in Christ will be found to have a peculiar converse with the word, and a peculiar relish of it on their spirits, according to the promise, Isa. lix. 21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." The Bible being the discovery of the heart of Christ towards sinners, the word on which he causeth them to hope, the magazine of their comfort, the sword of the Spirit only fit to repulse their doubts and fears, it is not to be doubted, but they will shew a peculiar respect to it as such. And it will be their book above all others; their book for heart holiness, and not for bare head knowledge; their book by which they desire to walk, and not only whereof they may talk. And those places which go most near to discover the naughtiness of man's nature, and the remedy thereof in Christ, will be most prized, and the name of Christ crucified in it, the ointment that perfumes all.

7. *Lastly*. They will be found to have a peculiar respect to the place where his honour dwells, to the ordinances. If men rejoice in Christ Jesus in their hearts it is not to be supposed but that in their conversation there will shine a peculiar respect to the galleries wherein Christ walks, the place where he records his name, and

usually feeds his people. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. lxiii. 1, 2, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." And because they have business there for eternity for communion with God, and participation of his holiness, there will be something in their conversation there shewing them more kindly guests than others. It is an open confession of Christ, to worship him in the assemblies of his saints. I know not how they satisfy themselves that they rejeice in Christ Jesus, that rejoice not when it is said to them, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord; how they satisfy themselves that have an interest in the treasure, while they so little value the opening of the field to discover the treasure. The slighting of the ordinances, I suppose, will be found not to be at least the ordinary spot of God's people, according to the Scriptures. And as for such of you as do not ordinarily attend the public ordinances, (as there are not a few amongst us), be your impediment what it will, if it be not to your souls as the drawing of the hungry babe off the breast, your affliction, and not your choice, ye may be accounted slighters of the treasure and the field both; as men may punctually attend all ordinances, and yet be far from rejoicing in the Lord of ordinances, and from any such joy shining out in their conversation about them. It is not every one that gathers the manna there, though it falls at the tent-doors of all alike. But that still remains a truth in the worst of times, that "God's words do good to him that walketh uprightly," Mic. ii. 7. And it fares with gospel hearers as it did with Jonathan's servant, 1 Sam. xx. 38, 39, "And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.

Secondly, With respect to the gracious soul's conversation in a suffering time, the man's glorifying in Christ with respect to the cross; our Lord has a weighty word, Mark viii. 38, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." In opposition to this, we must glory in Christ even at such a time, if we would evidence ourselves true Christians.

1. The saints will keep on Christ's side, though it may be lowest; as better with the cross, than the world's side with the crown. There is never a soul engageth with Christ aright, but is reconciled to the cross of Christ; and in the day of its closing with him, lays

down its all at his feet, taking them up again at his command, to hold them as his, and to use them for him, ay and till he call for them, Luke xiv. 26: and so is content to run all hazards with him, and will not be boasted away from him; "For love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave," Cant. viii. 6. In a time of prosperity Christ gets such a backing as Gideon with his thirty two thousand men, Judg. vii: but whenever the storm arises, there goes off a large multitude; and when they are particularly brought down to the waters of suffering, there goes off another party, till few do remain. But they to whom the kingdom is appointed, will continue with him in the trial. But it seems self is such a salamander as can live in the fire, 1 Cor. xiii. 3; and that though men, by denying Christ to shift the cross, may prove themselves naught, yet even suffering for Christ will not prove one to be a saint; 2 Cor. xi. 13, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." Compared with ver. 23, "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool), I am more; in labour more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." Consider then,

2. The saints will carry in this matter meekly and humbly, however boldly, as knowing the snare, and their own weakness to resist; and not from a Roman courage, or natural stiffness and briskness of spirit, which being from proud self, will never make the man act humbly or suffer so. Hence is that exortation, 1 Pet. iii. 15, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." They will glory in Christ, not only as he for whom, but also as he by whom they suffer. Often has it been observed, that the humble, self-distrusting man, whose soul has trembled within him for fear of dishonouring the Lord, by his fainting in time of trial, has been the sound-hearted sufferer; while the brisk, fearless professor has made a sad account of himself, when it came to the point of suffering in earnest: Is. xl. 29, 30, 31, "The Lord giveth power to the faint: and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail. But they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

3. *Lastly*, Though the saints will glory in the cross of Christ before the world, yet they will glory more in himself even before them, but before God no glorifying but in Christ. But it will readily be found, that if men do suffer for Christ that have no interest in him, they will glory more in his cross than himself; I mean,

the cross they bear for his cause, not the sufferings of Christ, called "the cross of Christ," Gal. vi. 14. It appears, that those seducers that disturbed the churches, gloried much in their sufferings for Christ, 2 Cor. xi. 23: but in our text, the apostle, to difference himself and other believers from them, says, "We are the circumcision, that—rejoice in Christ Jesus." Thus far of the second character of a gracious soul, which I may sum up in the words of the apostle, Rom. x. 9, 10, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." I shall straightway proceed to the

III. *Third* and *Last* character of a real saint. "And have no confidence in the flesh." This is an inference from the second character, and natively follows thereupon; for if our rejoicing be in Christ, it will not be in another. The fixing of the soul on him, is the removing of it from, and the rejecting of all other confidences. And therefore I shall endeavour briefly to dispatch it. I shall not trouble you with the various acceptation of this word flesh in the Scripture. It is taken here for any created thing whatsoever, without Christ, that is to say, which is not in Christ, on which men confide in whole or in part, to commend them to God, whether they be external things or internal. Thus the saints "have no confidence in the flesh; or they confide not, or have not confidence in the flesh, as others read it. The expressions are much the same; only it must be considered, that this character is given them, not in the eye of the law, but in the eye of the gospel, as may afterwards appear. "He who placeth his confidence for salvation," (they are the words of a judicious commentator on the place), "either in whole or in part, in any thing whatsoever, which is not Christ, or in Christ; certainly confides not in Christ, nor glories in him; and therefore is none of the circumcison, nor born of the Spirit." That this is the true sense of the words, appears from the opposition, in the text, betwixt rejoicing in Christ and confidence in the flesh; as also from the Apostle's own expilcation, vers. 4—8; where he shews what he meant by the flesh, not only external but internal things, drawing off his confidences from all things without Christ, and centering the same on Christ alone. This is the character of a believer, but not as the former two, a positive mark of a saint; it is only a negative mark. The man that is not thus qualified is no saint: yet a man's being thus qualified, will not of itself prove him a saint; as is clear from the case of Judas, and all despairing persons, who have confidence in nothing, and so no confidence in the flesh. And so it is to be taken in conjunction with the former.

DOCTRINE. He is the real Christian, who rejoicing in Christ Jesus hath no confidence in any thing, that is not Christ, nor in Christ, in the matter of salvation.

There are two things which men's confidence in the matter of salvation doth respect; God's favour to them, and their duty to God. All know they cannot be happy without the favour of God, and that there is no attaining to salvation but in the way of duty, though most men cut their duty very short, and many bring it down to believing and repenting at the hour of death, they make it so scrimp. Accordingly we say, 1. The real Christian hath no confidence but in Christ in the point of justification, the pardon of his sin, and acceptance into favour with God. 2. He hath no confidence but in Christ for sanctification, and with respect to his duty. And both these the text, I think, aims at; and the matter of sanctification is not to be excluded, seeing the Christian worships God in spirit, and rejoices in Christ Jesus. These two points I shall endeavour to clear.

I. The true Christian hath no confidence in any thing that is not Christ, nor in Christ, in point of justification. He dare not, he will not place his confidence, in whole or in part, in any other thing, to commend him to God and his favour. Christ is the only sconce he lippens to for his defence against wrath; only his blood is the saint's life, his righteousness his only covering. Hence says the Apostle, Phil. iii. 7, 8, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." The saint's best things are of no value with him in this matter; he accounts all his righteousness as filthy rags, Is. lxiv. 6. He renounces all pleas before the Lord, but the plea of Christ's satisfaction; turns his back on all other refuges, and runs to the horns of the altar, and holds there. He owns guilt, acknowledges himself a just object of vengeance, but throws himself into the arms of a Mediator, and looks not for a smile from the throne but through the Redeemer's wounds, nor a pardon but what is written in the characters of Christ's blood without mixture. Happy is the man that so doth; Christ himself says it, Matth. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." He is of the circumcision; for he rejoiceth in Christ, having had his confidence cut off from those things in which many place their confidence, to the ruin of their souls. It is not to be expected we can reckon up the false confidences that the heart out of Christ hath. Many a starting-hole will the soul

have, till it be driven out of them all to Christ. The ignorant, the profane, the formalist, the natural man awakened, have their several confidences, whereby they hope to do well enough without Christ, or at least not to be obliged to him for all. I shall hint at some of these, whereby ye may judge of the rest accordingly. I have already shown, that the saints have no confidence in the mercy of God out of Christ; and yet that is the strong confidence of many. But there are two things, besides, on which many build their confidence, to wit, external things, and internal things; some things without them, and some things within them.

First, The saints have no confidence in external things, and will be loathe to lay their weight, in whole or in part, upon them; whether they be man's externals, or God's externals.

1. The saints have no confidence in man's externals. I call those things so, which God never made duty, but men make them so. These are not only vain confidences, but vain worship and service, that is loathsome to God, Matth. xv. 9. Men are apt to cut the law short enough, as it is found in the word; but men's nature has a wonderful itching after making additions of their own to it. Hence a cloud of superstition has darkened some churches, and the simplicity of gospel worship is despised; men's inventions are brought in upon, yea, and instead of divine institutions: and when God has taken off the yoke of ceremonies instituted by himself, which the church was not able to bear, Acts xv. 10, men have devised out of their own hearts a yoke of ceremonies in the worship of God, to tempt God, and bind it on the neck of the churches. But though they shall be bound on with the tie of antiquity, as Matth. v. 21. there is no prescription against the law of God, Matth. xv. 2, 3; with the tie of church-authority, as Matth. xxiii. 4, the church can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, 2 Cor. xiii. 8; or with the tie of civil authority, as Hos. v. 11; seeing it cannot be set home on the conscience with, Thus saith the Lord, it is to be rejected, and by no means complied with, be the hazard what it will. For it is from Satan, and not from God: 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Deut. iv. 2, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Hence also flows a crowd of opinions and practices in the matters of God not found in

the word, but contrary to it, which men zealously stick to as certain duties. Men greedily drink up these, and will be far more forward in them than commanded duties, because nature is always fond of its own brats. If men once take in these things, very readily will they have confidence in them, and highly value themselves upon them, Judg. xvii. 12, 13; as is plain from the case of the Pharisees, and of others who herein tread in their steps: for it may be observed, that in every society, according as these things do rise, the very doctrine of free grace falls proportionably, and men will be found more zealous for a trifling ceremony, an unwarrantable opinion or practice, than for the vitals of Christianity. As all gospel truths and institutions have a tendency towards the life of faith, and centre in Jesus Christ, Eph. iv. 20, 21; so it will be found, that all unscriptural institutions, opinions, and practices, under whatever pretences of holiness they be advanced, have a tendency to weaken the life of faith, to carry men off from Christ and are subservient to self, to high and towering imaginations against Christ, Matth. xv. 4, 5, 6; Col. ii. 18, 19, 21. There is no error in the head, but has some corruption in the heart, to which it is allied, and will strive to advance. But do others as they will, the saints will rejoice in Christ, and not make men's externals their confidence, Phil. iii. 5, 7. And no wonder; for,

2. The saints have no confidence even in God's externals; by which I understand those external things that are laid before us by God himself, which nevertheless have a mighty stress laid upon them by carnal men. And,

1*st*, They have no confidence in their external condition in the world. Whatever it be by the providence of God, they will not look on it as a thing that may commend them to God. Strange is the deceit of a carnal heart. If a man be poor and mean in the world, he thinks that is sufficient to secure him against eternal poverty; and concludes thence, that God will have him to suffer all his misery here, as if it could not consist with the justice of God, to make him miserable here and hereafter too. If he be rich and honourable, that swells him with conceit of himself, and his riches are his strong tower. As he is set before others in the world, he looks to come before others in another world on the same score. Let the word say to him what it will, he keeps his confidence, saying, Hos. xii. 8, "Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin." And if a man meet with some signal favourable providences as to his outward condition, he looks on himself as the darling of heaven. But the saints will not place their confidence there: "For the king-

dom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17. They cannot so much as be evidences, far less confidences. Hence says the Preacher, Eccl. ix. 1, 2, "For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred, by all that is before them. All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked," &c. Ye may be poor and miserable here, and miserable through eternity, Job xv. 23, 24. Ye may fare deliciously every day, with the rich man, and yet in hell lift up your eyes, Luke xvi. And though like Saul seeking asses, ye found a kingdom, ye may be rejected of God as he was.

2*dly*, The saints have no confidence in their external privileges. The false apostles boasted much of their being Abraham's seed, of their circumcision, and the like. But, says the apostle, "We have no confidence in the flesh." He renounces all confidence in these things, vers. 5, 7; 2 Cor. v. 16, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh," says he: "yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." We reckon no more on our being the children of Abraham; nay nor the brethren of Christ himself by nation. But where will the confidence of many be if these be removed, that they are church members, partakers of all church privileges, and in society with Christ's party in the world? But rased it is in the saints, and rased it must be in others now, or it will be done, when there will be no occasion of getting another foundation of confidence laid: Luke xiii. 26, 27, "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." And when the children of the kingdom are shut out, their case of all men will be most sad.

3*dly*, The saints have no confidence in their external attainments; as was the case with the apostle, Phil. iii. 6, 7, who, "concerning zeal, persecuted the church; touching the righteousness, which is in the law, (was) blameless. But what things were gain to (him,) those (he) counted loss for Christ." Great confidence have some in their negative holiness, Luke xviii. 11; they can hold up their face to heaven, and say, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," &c. They have lived honestly all their days, never wronged their neighbours; they are not profane, they are neither drunkards, swearers, Sabbath breakers, unclean persons, &c., and have observed the commands of God better that many. And indeed they have been going to hell

without letting the world hear the sound of their feet. Or perhaps, though they have been profane, yet that was but the folly of youth; but now they have taken up themselves, they are not what they were; and therefore doubt not of God's favour. Sirs, this is not the spot of God's people; they will as soon venture to sea in a bottomless boat, as venture their souls on this, that know ought of God or of his law. There are in hell this day, who have had all that to say that ye trust in; and if ye renounce it not, and get Christ in you the hope of glory, ye shall never see heaven: Matth. v. 20, "For except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

4thly, The saints have no confidence in their external duties; they have renounced their confidence, in whole and in part, in what they do or have done, Phil. iii. 6, 7, above-cited. Ver. 8. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." By doing they never think to see heaven. There are two sorts of men opposite to the Christian in this.

(1.) There is a rude, ignorant generation, who do little at all in the way of external duties, and yet they say, they serve God as well as they can; or though they have no strength in themselves, they do as well as God will give them grace; yea, some will say, they do as well as God will give them leave. I speak what I know to be true. And here is their cursed confidence. All this is the filthy vomit of a proud and rebellious heart against God, by which they very plainly lay the blame on God that they do not better, like fallen Adam, Gen. iii. 12. But dare such say before a heart searching God, that they have done all they could have done? Could ye not have holden in rash words that ye have spoken? could ye not have done something for eternity that ye did not? &c. But suppose, O man, thou hadst done all thou couldst, God's law is the rule of thy duty, and not thy strength; and if thou get not in to Christ, God's curse lies, and shall lie on thee through eternity, because thou "continuest not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. The devils have no strength to do good, nor will God give them grace: and yet their damnation is just: so will thine be. Thou hast grace in thine offer, which he is not obliged to give thee; but thou art a despiser and rejecter of grace, John v. 40, "Ye will not come to me," says Christ, "that ye might have life." Read your doom, Matth. xxv. 24, 25, "Then he which had received the one talent, came and said,

Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine." Verse 30, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

(2.) There is another sort who do indeed go the round of external duties; they attend public ordinances, worship God in secret and in their families; and as men can quarrel nothing in their outward duties towards God, so they neglect not their external duties of righteousness and mercy toward others. They have the outward form of godliness. And these are but few; would God there were more of whom that could be said. But, alas! in the mean time they rest on these external things, Luke xviii. 12; Isa. lviii. 3. They put them in Christ's room. But these things are so unfit to be confidences, that they cannot be evidences; for there is nothing in all the form of godliness beyond the reach of a hypocrite; and as they are mere external duties, they are an abomination to the Lord, Isa. i. 11, &c.; Mark x. 20, 21. And will ye make them your confidence? Thy doing so demonstrates, that thou knowest neither the law of God, which cannot be satisfied but with inward, as well as outward obedience, nor the gospel of Christ, which overturns all these confidences before the Lord. Believe it, "The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them," Jer. ii. 37. Sure the saints dare have no confidence in them, nor will they venture before the Lord in these filthy rags, Is. lxiv. 6.

Lastly, The saints have no confidence in their external sufferings, though for Christ and his cause. Paul was a great sufferer, 2 Cor. xi. 23. to the end; but yet he "suffered the loss of all things for Christ," Phil. iii. 8; and so suffered the loss of his sufferings in point of confidence, among the rest. There is a party, Rev. vii. 14 15, whose garments had been rolled in their own blood for the cause of Christ; but durst they appear before the Lord in them? No; they "washed them in the blood of the Lamb;" and "therefore are they before the throne;" otherwise they had gone from the scaffold for Christ, into the pit of hell from the presence of the Lord. And far less will they have confidence in their other sufferings, of what sort soever they be. Few can suffer for Christ; but there are yet fewer, who can both suffer, and not have confidence in their sufferings. O it is hard to lay out goods and gear, liberty and life, on the cause of Christ, and after all to think Christ is nothing at all in our debt: and that he may very justly bring others that have had at far cheaper religion, as far in as ourselves. The unhumbled sufferer may read his heart in that murmuring complaint of the

labourers, Matth. xx. 12, "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day." But if men's confidence be not cut off from their sufferings, sad and dreadful will the doom be at length, ver. 14, "Take that thine is," said the good man of the house, "and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee." Verse 16, So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few chosen." If they be lippened to in whole or in part, what is given to them is robbed from the sufferings of Christ; and so will they prove a broken reed, that will not only fail, but pierce the hand and heart through with eternal sorrows. There is also a rude ignorant generation, who think if they suffer what is laid on them by common providence, all will be well with them in the world to come, for they suffer their misery here: and particularly women dying in child-birth are accounted happy on this very account, by a generation ignorant of God; for they say, these pains are, of all pains hereaway, likest the pains of hell. O brutish ignorance! O the perverseness of a hellish heart, to take the curse for a confidence in the matter of obtaining the blessing! The apostle indeed, 1 Tim. ii. 15, gives a comfort to godly women in the pains of child-birth, that they shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith; but says not, they shall be saved by it, or that they shall be saved whether they believe or not. Let men or women's hell be as hot as it will in the world, if they renounce not all confidence in their sufferings, and betake themselves to the sufferings of Christ allernally, they shall assuredly, when they die, go out of one hell into another.

Secondly. The saints have no confidence for the favour of God, in internals, in any thing within them. I have no exception to make here but one; and that is, Christ in you, the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. There are precious things in the saints, that make them all glorious within; but nothing but Christ that can be confidences for God's favour; though some of them may indeed be evidences.

1. The saints have no confidence in their internal dispositions. The dispositions of their hearts are none of their confidences before the Lord; for "he that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool," Prov. xxviii. 26. Many have a deal of confidence in those good hearts they have towards God, as they speak. They see not the naughtiness of their hearts, and the enmity against God that lurks there. Satan has them so blinded with self-love, that they cannot believe an ill tale ot their hearts. This is not the spot of God's people. There is little goodness of heart in the world; but the best heart is always worst looked upon, Matth. xxvi. 22, 25; 1 Tim. i. 15; and no

wonder, for they believe God's testimony of it, Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Again, men wish they were better, and hope they may be better, and find a disposition in their spirits to do much and suffer much for Christ, and a great aversion to many ill things they see in the world. And indeed people may draw evidences of their state from the dispositions of their hearts; but they had need to examine them well, seeing all these may be in hypocrites, Prov. xiii. 4; Hos. vi. 4; 2 Kings x. 16; Luke xviii. 11. But at best they can be no confidences, seeing there is always such a mixture of evil dispositions with them, as might ruin men.

2. The saints have no confidence in their internal exercises upon their spirits. Hypocrites may have their exercises about their soul's matters. They may be troubled about their soul's state, as we see in Simon, Acts viii. and Felix, Acts xxiv. They may have great inward struggles betwixt corruption and an enlightened conscience, upon a temptation laid in their way; as in the case of Herod, about beheading John; and of Pilate, about the condemning Christ; yea so as the temptation may be resisted in the end, as in Balaam's case. What restlessness of spirit, self-indignation, was in Judas's case? What strong resolutions did terrors on Saul and Pharaoh produce in them? The saints have more kindly exercises. But one difference amongst many betwixt the two, is, that the exercises of the godly issue still in driving them further out of themselves, Matth. v. 3, and consequently out of any confidence in their exercises; while the other are either by theirs driven out of all hope, as Judas, or driven more into themselves, as those, Rom. x. 3, who "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

3. The saints have no confidence in their internal attainments. Hypocrites may have vast attainments, great gifts, enlargements in the exercise of these gifts by a common operation of the Spirit. They may attain to raptures of joy in holy duties, yea, and taste of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come. Read these scriptures, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 3; Matth. xiii. 20, 21; Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. But although these cannot be evidences, they make them confidences, and ruin themselves thereby, Matth. vii. 22, 23. So many build their confidence on the like of these things; and whereas they should lead them to Christ, they are carried the farther from Christ by them. But miserable comforters will they find them all at length. The saints have far higher attainments than these. The least measure of saving knowledge, communion with God in

Christ, the least groan from a heart touched with gospel-grace, Rom. viii. 26, is better than all those bulky attainments of the hypocrite. Yet because they are not Christ, nor in Christ, but in themselves, though from Christ, they will not, they dare not make them their confidences for the Lord's favour. They know God to be holy, themselves impure vessels, into which nothing can be poured, be it never so good, but it will be tinctured with impurity. And, therefore, Paul, who was caught up into the third heavens, yet abhors to glory in any thing but the sufferings of Christ, Gal. vi. 14; Phil. iii. 8.

4. *Lastly*, The saints have no confidence in their graces, their inherent graces. Grace is precious, and makes the soul in some measure like God. Happy is the man that has it. Every believer has the image of God on him, grace for grace that is in Christ, as the wax has on it the print of the seal. But this I confidently say, it is the grace of God in Christ, not the grace of God in the saints, that they confide in before the Lord. However precious inherent grace is, it is not Christ; it is but a created quality in a sinner. Let it be screwed to its highest pitch that it comes to in any saint on earth, it cannot answer the demands of the law, being mixed with corruption; and being lippened unto that way, would prove but an arm of flesh. It is gold indeed, but not such as will abide the fiery trial of the law's furnace: it is white raiment indeed; but it is not pure, but stained white, which is no fit garment for a criminal to stand in for favour at the court of heaven: and therefore Christ offers sinners tried gold, unstained white raiment, of his own sufferings and righteousness, Rev. i ii. 18. And so the saints renounce all without them and within them for it. Hence, says the apostle, Phil. iii. 8, 9, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom have I suffered the loss of all things, and do connt them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

I shall instance in these two, which are in effigy most abused by carnal men, and set up against Christ.

1*st*, The grace of repentance. There is an ignorant generation, ask them, how they think to he saved? they will tell you, they repent of their sins day and night. This they will say whom their soul's hazard never kept from an hour's sleep all their days. The matter is, they rue many things they do; and no wonder, for they cannot be fond of destruction. And thus they know not what sin is, nor what repentance is indeed. O what needed Christ to have come, and groaned and died on a cross, under the weight of wrath,

if people may be saved this way? Lippen to this as ye will, ye will repent in hell that ever ye should have made it either evidence or confidence. But there are some who spin a more fine thread of soul deception of themselves, as the word is, Gal. vi. 3. They have in very deed legal qualms of conscience, and their guilt cuts them to the heart; and they go to God, and confess their sin, are resolved to forsake, and never do the like again; and so build their confidence here, especially if they get tears for it; and they think they can give Scripture for this confidence of theirs, as Prov. xxviii. 13, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy;" and Matth. v. 4, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." Sirs, hypocrites may do all this; Judas repented as bitterly as ever ye did, Pharaoh and Saul confessed and had their resolutions to forsake, and Esau his tears. But what law or what gospel allows you to make this your confidence? Will your confession, prayers, tears, forsaking of sin, (which yet indeed ye do not from the heart), answer the demands of the law? Will these shield you from the strokes of justice? Remember it is "shedding of blood," not pouring out of water, much less pouring out of words, that can purchase remission. Many times where water goes out, wind enters in, and makes the tears so abominable as they cannot come into the Lord's bottle. Cursed be those tears that blind the soul so as it cannot see the absolute necessity of the blood of Christ, that are not brought to the fountain of Christ's blood, and washed there, lest they make the soul abominable in the sight of a holy God. If you think the gospel gives you ground, sure it is not the gospel of Christ does it; for Christ's gospel establishes the law, which ye do thus overturn, Rom. iii. 31; and x. 4. The truth is, in this way ye reject both the true law and gospel, and treat with God in the way of a bastard covenant of works of your own making, which God will never agree to; nor does he agree to it by those promises made to them that confess, and them that mourn. Consider, they must either be promises of the covenant of works, or of the covenant of grace. Promises of the covenant of works they are not; for that is express, Gal. iii. 10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." If they be promises of the covenant of grace, how come ye to plead them without first laying hold by faith on him in whom they are all yea and amen? Now, this ye cannot do, according to the text, unless ye have no confidence in any thing that is not Christ, or in Christ. Do ye think that the Spirit of God makes there a promise of mercy from an unatoned God, or directs to a confession not put in the hand of the "Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous?" 1 John ii. 1. No; "God heareth not sinners, but he

heareth him always; and those petitions that are presented by him, he grants them to sinners for his sake. And that promise, Matth. v. 4, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted," is it to all mourners, think ye? is it to Esau's tears, and Judas's groans? It is to gospel mourners: and therefore that men might have no ground to mistake these blessings, our Lord fixeth that point first, and sets it in the front of the blessings, to be carried through all the rest, ver. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." And such are all true penitents; and therefore will never make their repenting and mourning their confidence before the Lord. They are dissatisfied with all they do, because they can do nothing as they ought, Is. lxiv. 6; and, upon a review of their repentance, they see such defects in it, as needs a cover of blood; their tears clear their eyes to see the necessity of the Mediator's blood the better: therefore says David, in his bitter repentings, Psalm li. 7, "Purge me with hyssop;" that is with the blood of the everlasting covenant, the blood of the Redeemer, typified by the blood of the sacrifices sprinkled with hyssop on the people, Heb. ix. 19, 20, and by the blood of a bird sprinkled with hyssop on the leper, when he was to be cleansed, and restored to society, Luke xiv. 6, 7. Wash me, to wit, as a fuller washeth cloth to make it pure white. It seems he thought his own plunging himself in his tears could not whiten the stained soul. Nay, the true penitent is free grace's debtor for all, and will acknowledge it is free grace that he is not shut out from the presence of God and his mercy, after he hath bathed himself in his tears, Psal. li. 11, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Here he acknewledgeth, he might justly get Cain and Saul's measure. "Cast me not away from thy presence," as thou didst Cain the first murderer; "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me," as thou took thy Spirit from Saul the first king of Israel upon his disobedience, 1 Sam. xvi. 14. Compare 2 Sam. vii. 15.

2dly, The grace of faith. There is an ignorant generation that say they believe in God or in Christ; but their faith cannot be called knowledge, as Isa. liii. 11, for they are full of darkness in their minds, they know not what faith is, nor how they came by it; their faith grew up with them, (for they think they believed all their days,) and it will die with them. They have a strong confidence of mercy; which is but gross presumption, seeing it neither purifies heart nor life, Acts xv. 9; 1 John iii. 3; and therefore "shall be rooted out of (their) tabernacle, and it shall bring (them) to the king of terrors," Job xvii. 14. And there are others who came not so easily by the faith they have; yet it is not faith unfeigned, 1 Tim. i. 5, but they make it their confidence. There are many things that men call faith, among ignorant and knowing folk

too, who are yet in the state of nature. The revelation of the absolute necessity of faith to salvation is so clear, that hardly can a person be a hearer of the gospel, and not know it; and every man naturally has a principle of self-preservation: hence upon the hearing of this, and especially upon awakenings of conscience, nature will make some efforts for believing. But faith being produced only by the "working of God's mighty power," Eph. i. 19, and not by the power of nature, the result of all nature's efforts this way, is but some misshapen brat instead of faith. Hence we read of Simon's believing, Acts viii. 13; and many believing in his name, whom yet Christ knew to be naught, John ii. 23, 24, 25; and some "staying themselves upon the God of Israel, but not in truth and righteousness," Is. xlviii. 1, 2. I am not here to enter on the several sorts of feigned faith; but with relation to our purpose, there is one thing to be noticed concerning them all, and that is, they never carry a man out of himself to Jesus Christ for all, as true faith doth. That misshapen faith is not the soul's going out of itself to Christ to live in and by him: but is the soul's going of itself and with self to Christ, as a servant to a master. For nature cannot act but in the way of the first covenant: and to a natural man, in his practical judgment, the gospel-way of salvation differs not in kind from the way of Adam's covenant, but only in the measure and degree of obedience; for to them it is still, "Do this, and live; Do this," not do perfect obedience indeed, they know they cannot reach that; but repent, believe, reform, "Do this." Now, the natural man accordingly does this; and so the work of faith (for I must call it so) is to him the fulfilling of the condition of this new covenant, and turns his confidence before the Lord for his favour, as Adam's perfect obedience to the law would have been his confidence. This was the confidence of Israel when they had "cast off the thing that was good," Hos. viii. 2, "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee;" and of the foolish virgins, Matth. xxv. 11, "Lord, Lord, (they plead a covenant interest in him, Matth vii. 21,) open to us, us virgins." Thus may ye see how their faith is their folly, as being put in the room of Christ; and so they have but rags for righteousness. But the saints have a faith of the operation of God; yet do they not rest in it, but by it rest and confide on Jesus Christ. It carries the saint out of himself, even his gracious self, Phil. iii. 8. True faith is not a burden-bearer, but an onlayer of burdens, Psalm lv. 22. It is not a leaning stock, but an act of leaning, Cant. viii. 5. It purifies indeed, Acts xv. 9, but no other way but as it lays open the soul to Christ, that a stream of blood may run through it. The hyssop and scarlet wool were no doubt a blithe sight to the people, and particularly to the poor lepers under the law:

but had the dry hyssop and wool been shaken never so oft over them, what would they have availed? but they are dipt in the blood, and the people sprinkled with that blood from off the hyssop and scarlet wool. And when the blood fell, the people were ceremonially purged, and the leper cleansed. And so is it in the case of believing. Thus ye see the saints have no confidence in point of justification, or for obtaining God's favour, in any thing that is not Christ, or in Christ.

The saints have no confidence in point of sanctification, or with respect to duty, in any thing that is not Christ, nor in Christ. As they have taken him alone for justification, so they take him alone for sanctification; for he is made unto us sanctification," as well as righteousness, 1 Cor i. 30. The Father has constituted him the head of influences for duty; and from that head it is that all the body having nourishment ministered, increaseth with the increase of God," Col. ii 19. And this is that life of faith for sanctification that the saints live: John vi. 57. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Gal. ii 20. "I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." There are here also many things men make their confidences, which I cannot particularly name; but, in the general there are seven things I shall touch at, which are but arms of flesh when lippened to, in the matter of sanctification.

1. The saints have no confidence in their stock of natural and acquired abilities, gifts or parts, in the point of sanctification, or performance of duties. Hence says the Apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 5. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." This is the stock which is the confidence of many in their religious duties; and upon it they can venture on duty undaunted, their work being rather to be filled with the thoughts of their own strength, and what their abilities may reach, than to be emptied of themselves; to muster up their forces, than to be looking to the Lord for strength from above, and overlooking themselves. Thus a gift of knowledge, utterance, a good natural temper or disposition, and such like, are by natural men put in Christ's room; and on these they confide for performing of duties, and bearing out against temptations. And upon this foudation have stately buildings of morality been reared up, and very glorious form of godliness, which beholders have blessed, while God, that seeth the heart, has cursed them: Jer. xvii. 5. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." But this is not the way of the saints: Psal. xliv. 5, 6. "Through thee will we

push down our enemies," says the Psalmist; "through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me." Is. xl. 29, 30. Natural men are represented as youths full of natural vigour, strength and activity, who will do their work by themselves, and wait not upon the Lord. But the godly are distinguished from them as men who see their strength failed, and not to be lippened to; and hence look without themselves for it, and roll their way on the Lord, is finding their own shoulders unable for the burden.

2. The saints have no confidence in the means of sanctification, as the word, sacrements, prayer, afflictions, and the like; knowing that "it is the spirit that quickeneth," John vi. 63. and that they are only means through which influences are conveyed from Christ to the souls of his people. None look with such an affectionate eye on the ordinances as they, but none look so far above them either, Psal. xxvii. 4.; for the natural man either tramples on them, or idolizeth them, being satisfied with the chair of state though empty. Many are ruined with their confidence in this way: they rest in the work done, as if that would heal their sores; they place that confidence, in means and instruments, which they should place in Christ himself: and hence they go from one mean to another, and still are "like the heath in the wilderness, that seeth not when good cometh, and that inhabiteth the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited, Jer. xvii. 6. There is a voice they hear within them stirring them up to holiness of life; but upon the hearing of it, they do as young Samuel, who, when the Lord called him, went to Eli: so they go to this and the other mean of sanctification, but never look beyond them to the fountain of sanctification in the Mediator, or as the woman labouring under the issue of blood, spent all her means on the physicians ere she came to Christ.

3. The saints have no confidence in their purposes and resolutions for holiness. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. cxvi .9, 10. "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken." He had resolved, but his confidence was in the Lord, in whom he had believed. Compare what the Apostle says, 2 Tim. i 12. "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. O how venturous is nature, being once fleshed with vigorous purposes and resolves! but when the temptation comes they fall down like the walls of Jericho, at the sounding of ram's horns, Prov. vii. 21, 22; Matth. viii. 19, 20. Their bent bow in which they trusted quickly misgives; the fire-edge soon wears off the spirit that is not staid on the Lord. How many purposes and strong resolutions come to nought, because in taking them up men

look not to the Lord as the fountain of strength, but to themselves; and when they are made, there is more weight laid on them than they can bear? Hence the root being rottenness, the blossom flies up as dust; as was the case with the young man void of understanding, who when a whore "with her much fair speech caused him to yield, and with the flattering of her lips forced him, went after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, Prov. vii. 21, 22.

4. The saints have no confidence in their vows and engagements to holiness, or any particular duty; knowing that these are too weak bands for a masterful ill heart, which nothing but the power of the Spirit of Christ can hedge in. Every saint is devoted to the Lord with his own deliberate consent, having given away himself wholly to Christ, to be disposed of as he will, 2 Cor. viii. 5; and will look on his soul and body as consecrated things, and no more his own but the Lord's, to do and suffer for him, according to his will. But while the saints take on these solemn bands, and come under these awful and sacred engagements to duty, their confidence is not in the bands, but in him to whom they are bound, and to whom they bind themselves as to the fountain of strength: Isa. xlv. 23, 24, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." But, alas! the vows of many are in effect a vowing themselves away from Christ. Nature awakened is very fruitful in vows. Sometimes the man will bind a yoke on himself that the word never bound on him, and insnare himself with a vow to abstain from such and such a thing altogether, when his conscience gets up on him for his running to some monstrous excess in it. Or if it be a duty he was wofully slighted, he will come under a vow not only to set about it, but so often, and at such and such times particularly, which is not yet determined by the word. And when he has been carried off into courses absolutely condemned by the word and in which his natural conscience will give him no rest, there shall be a violent sally of the soul against them, ending in a solemn promise and vow to the Lord, never to do any more, without any eye to the corruption of nature, which might make him weary of his words before the Lord, or to the Lord Jesus Christ, without whom we can do nothing, and from whom all our strength must come. And thus the poor blinded soul thinks it is fenced, and in this mud-wall of vows is its confidence. But what is the end of it? The man is even like one that has a brook running through his ground, which often spoils it with its outbreakings, and he builds a call to stop it; but is not so wise as to fill up the spring, or turn the stream

another way, where it could not do such harm: and so within a little time the water gathers, and forcibly breaks down the call, running out with more violence than ever. And so the vows go like Samson's green withs, when he heard the Philistines were upon him.

5. The saints have no confidence in their own endeavours after holiness. Hence says the Psalmist, Psalm cxxvii. 1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain." It is the property of a saint, to work as diligently as if he had none to help, but to overlook his work as if he had not put hand to it at all: 1 Cor. xv. 10, I laboured more abundantly than they all," says the Apostle: "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." O, there is much to be done for the advancing of holiness; but none have so much confidence in what is done for that end, as those that do least that way. A man may do very much to win over some lusts, and to attain to such a sort of life as his conscience tells him is necessary for him if he would see heaven, and yet be naught, as working from himself, resting in himself. Herod did many things. It is a difficult thing indeed, for a man to be pursuing a good life, and to win over troublesome lusts, and in pursuit thereof to pray often, and vigorously too, yea, to fast and pray for the casting out of some devils, to struggle against them, watch against them, and to keep at a distance from the occasions of temptation, and such like: but it is far more difficult to be denied to all these when they are done, and to have no confidence in them, but for all to trust in him that raiseth the dead. Men under the law's tutory may do the former; for, skin, for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life; but grace is necessary to the latter, as that which can only carry a man out of himself to Christ.

6. The saints have no confidence in the good frame and disposition of their hearts; that is to say, in actual grace. A good frame is a most desirable thing, and makes a great facility in the way of God while it lasts. It is a precious ointment that refreshes the traveller; but it is no good staff to lean on, it will not bear the weight of one duty: it is a lamp that will quickly go out, if it be not fed with fresh oil from the fountain of grace, the Lord Jesus. Remarkable is that petition of David for the people when they were in an excellent frame, 1 Chron. xxix. 17, 18, "As for me," says he, "in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee." He saw it was not to be made a confidence, and therefore lays the weight of all, and even of preserving that frame, upon the Lord

himself. But many, though their frame is no actual grace, but the product of some common operations on their spirits, make them their confidence, and in the strength thereof go out to their duties: but assuredly they shall not see when good cometh, who thus put their frame in the room of Christ; and often-times for that cause, in the just judgment of God, it fails them, ere they win through with the duty, that they may see it is not Christ, but a broken reed.

7. *Lastly*, The saints have no confidence in habitual grace. Paul had a great stock of it, but he durst not venture to live on it, Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ," says he: "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." As I said in the point of justification, so in the point of sanctification, it is not the grace of God within them which they confide in, but the grace without them, in Jesus Christ. The grace within the saints is a well whose springs are oft stopped, and whose streams are oft very dry; but the grace without them, in Christ, is an ever-flowing fountain, to which they can never come wrong. Where were the life and fruit of the branch, if it were left to the sap within itself, which would quickly evaporate and the branch wither? but it is the sap in the stock that keeps the branch living; and so it is the grace in Christ that keeps the believer living, John vi. 57. But, alas! there are not a few who have neither repentance, love, faith, nor other graces in truth, but the shadows of them, who yet make what they have, their confidence in point of sanctification; who, when they would make the fashion of believing, mourning, &c. look in to themselves for it, but look not up to Christ; whereas the pathway of the saints, is to mount up with wings as eagles, and then fall down on the prey. Thus ye see the saints have no confidence in the flesh, either in point of justification or sanctification; no confidence in any thing without them or within them, that is not Christ or in Christ. And whatever it is I have named, or that I have not named, which men make their confidence before the Lord either of these ways, to set it in the room of Christ, or to set it beside him, so far as it is made a confidence, be it devoted to a curse, and as such for ever exterminated and rooted out: Jer. xvii. 5, 6, "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

QUESTION. Is it so that every saint is altogether free of those false confidences, and no ways tainted in that sort? ANSWER. I

told you when entering on this clause, that this is not understood of the saints as if they were pure from it in the eye of the law, but in the eye of the gospel. There is a great and weighty truth supposed as the foundation of this description of the true Christian, and that is, That corrupt nature is quite opposite to Christ, and to the contrivance of salvation by him. It may be I may afterwards touch on it.* The way of the covenant of works is natural to men. Now, seeing that the best are but in part renewed, it is evident that there are in the greatest saints remains of a legal temper, and that nature now and then has in them its flings against the gospel-way, and towards cursed self, both in the point of obtaining God's favour, as in the case of Peter, Matth. xix. 27. who said unto Jesus, "Beheld, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" and in the point of duty, as in the case of James and John the sons of Zebedee, Matth. xx. 22, who, after Jesus, had put the question to them, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They said unto him, "We are able." But,

1. Every saint in his closing with Christ has been carried freely out of himself to Christ, though self has not yet been carried fully out of him: Psal. cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing [willingnesses] in the day of thy power." They shall pour out their hearts to him like water that comes freely away, though the vessel is not presently dry, but something of the water still cleaves to it for a time. Where the soul comes to Christ, there is a digging deep in that soul, that looses the confidence in the flesh at the root; so that the saint's heart is loosed from it, and, devoting it to a curse, lays itself naked and bare at Christ's feet, without any thing to condemn it to him, but for all ventures into the arms of free grace. But the hypocrite never comes freely out of himself to Christ: his closing with Christ is but a forced put at best; as Adonijah ran to the horns of the altar when in hazard of his life, who, it is like, cared very little for it otherwise; as the Israelites, Psal. lxxviii. 34—36, 37. Nor does the hypocrite ever come to the market of free grace without money in his hand; the proud heart has still something in itself whereupon to challenge welcome.

2. Every saint habitually walks in the way of renouncing all confidence in the flesh; the habitual bent and set of their souls lies out of themselves to Christ, though, through the prevailing of corruption, they want not often the risings of self in them. And God reckons of his people according to what they habitually are, and not according to what starting aside their corruption does occasion. So they are

* See Human nature in its fourfold state, state 2. head 1. concerning the corruption of the will.